Library of the Theological Seminary,
PRINCETON, N. J.

Presented by Mr. Samuel Agnew of Philadelphia, Pa.

BT 453 .D36 1839
Daniell, Mortlock.
Calvary

CALVARY;

OR

THE CROSS

BY MORTLOCK DANIELL,

MINISTER AT BEULAH CHAPEL, RAMSGATE.

"Τί τὸ πλάτος καὶ μῆκος καὶ βάθος καὶ ὕψος" &c.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

GARDINER & SON, PRINCES STREET,
CAVENDISH SQUARE;
HAMILTON, ADAMS, & Co. PATERNOSTER ROW.

Gardiner & Son, Printers, 20, Princes Street, Cavendish Square.

TO

SIR CULLING EARDLEY SMITH, Bart.

&c. &c. &c.

My dear Sir Culling,

In availing myself of your kind permission to dedicate to you the accompanying Volume—I feel assured your Christian principles will approve the step I have taken, in its previous dedication to God.

Your well known desire, however, for the diffusion of a pious liberality, and for the reciprocation of brotherly love, among all the followers of our common Lord, originated my request to which you so courteously acceded.

More especially because I consider that "the Cross of Christ" is a theme pre-eminently calculated to inculcate and cherish that *desideratum*. And that if there be any spot where bigotry, selfishness, and party-spirit are likely to be annihilated—IT IS CALVARY.

In proportion as we imbibe the meekness and lowliness of our crucified Redeemer, in a similar proportion, we shall "follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." And thus combining our efforts for the welfare of the church, and directing our mutual energies against 'the god of this world'—we shall *practically* pray, "THY KINGDOM COME."

The end of Christianity is to destroy selfishness in its members; that associating together, they may respect not so much the *outward* man, his dignity, his comeliness, his wealth, his mental cultivation; but rather that they may regard the *inner* man of the heart, his piety, spiritual-mindedness, and conformity to Jesus. Wherever therefore the comely image of righteousness and true holiness is discovered, no diversity of opinion that is not subversive of the fundamentals of our holy religion, should prevent a kind, social, and generous interchange.

So that notwithstanding the various modes of religious worship, and the dissimilar forms of ecclesiastical government, existing among the distinct sections of the militant church—there should be no interruption of personal communion, no disposition to question the sincerity of each other's proceedure, and no ambition to interfere with denominational authority and preference.

That a more enlarged fellowship with Jesus Christ may promote a more extended forbearance, and a more willing self-denial among his redeemed—and that with an uncompromising decision for sound doctrine and discipline, may be blended an uninterrupted charity and good-will, throughout every sect and denomination of believers—is the fervent prayer of,

With sincere esteem and respect,

My dear Sir Culling,

Your's very faithfully and obliged,

J. MORTLOCK DANIELL.

Ramsgate, *July* 1839.

PREFACE.

Till the death of Christ, the Cross conveyed no other idea than that of a most degrading kind of punishment, for the slave or the criminal. The mention of it was connected only with humiliating associations and excruciating agonies. Indeed it was more creditable to human sympathies to overlook, than to introduce it.

Jesus Christ has, however, invested it with such a peculiar glory, that beneath its shade every weary pilgrim may peacefully repose; and in its lustre, every broken-hearted sinner may read the salvation of his soul. So that there is now no spot so choice, no eminence so delightful, no atmosphere so pure as Calvary.

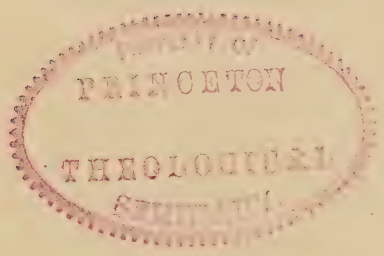
There to linger, is now no longer the result of a mind unmoved by the sufferings of a fellow creature; but the effect of a spirit softened into compunction by the grace of the Redeemer. No more the resort of the savage and the curious, it has become the refuge of the destitute and the kneeling-place of the suppliant.

The imprecations of the unbelieving Jews, "His blood be upon us and our children," have long ceased their awful echo round the tragic mountain; but the fervent prayer of many a believing Gentile, "God be merciful to me a sinner," still ascends from its summit.

The only pretensions of the Author of the ensuing pages, to dwell upon a theme, "so lofty, so immense," are his experimental acquaintance with its matchless preciousness, his conviction of its paramount importance, and his sense of obligation to that "Man of Sorrows," on whose bosom of sympathies he hopes to recline, in the approaching sleep of death, and in the ages of a blessed immortality.

That the Reader, if renewed, may be refreshed; and, if unrenewed, may be aroused to flee to the Cross of Christ for salvation, is the Author's sincere desire. And to this end, he would pray, "Let the words of my (pen) and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer."

RAMSGATE,
July 1839.



ANALYSIS OF CONTENTS.

		Page.
CHAPTER I. . .	THE INNOCENT SUFFERER.....	3
CHAPTER II, . .	THE ATONING SACRIFICE.	27
CHAPTER III. .	THE AFFECTIONATE SAVIOUR-..	52
CHAPTER IV. .	HIS FILIAL SOLICITUDE.....	73
CHAPTER V. . .	HIS PARDONING MERCY.....	91
CHAPTER VI. .	HIS SINLESS INFIRMITIES.....	120
CHAPTER VII. .	HIS SOUL-DESERTION.....	133
CHAPTER VIII .	HIS FERVENT INTERCESSION....	155
CHAPTER IX. .	HIS FIXED RESIGNATION.....	181
CHAPTER X. . .	HIS TRIUMPHANT DEATH.....	197
CHAPTER XI. .	HIS GLORIOUS RESURRECTION..	214
CHAPTER XII. .	HIS GODLIKE ASCENSION.....	242
CHAPTER XIII.	CONCLUSION.....	258

PRINCETON
THEOLOGICAL

CHAPTER I.

THE INNOCENT SUFFERER.

All that pertains to Christ must be unspeakably precious to the Christian. The divinity of his person and the perfection of his humanity—the merit of his righteousness and the efficacy of his blood—the sympathies of his cross and the triumphs of his crown, are not *alone* his glory, but the glory of the whole church.

Believer! you are unworthy of one reviving glance from his loving eye, or of one solitary crumb from the table of his entertainment; and the more your christian experience is matured, the deeper will be your apprehension of your habitual dependance. Nevertheless the Word of God assures you, for your encouragement, there is no grace in his fulness which is not for *you*—no sympathy in his heart which is not for *your* consolation—no jewel in his diadem that will not reflect an everlasting lustre upon *you*. Unworthy of the least, though an heir to the greatest! Perdition the doom you deserve; paradise the asylum you may safely anticipate.

Suffer then the enquiry—If upon you the fulness of Divine mercy has thus been poured—if you have been uplifted from the low pit of pollution, where by nature you laid, and where Justice might have smitten you, as an unforgiven outcast, with all the horrors of eternal despair—if you have been led to find your completeness in Jesus, and to feel or to hope, that he is made of God unto you "Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption"—How is it you so often stray from the cross? We refer not to those open and disgraceful deviations which most palpably give occasion to the enemy to blaspheme, and from which the children of God are mercifully restrained—we allude not to those carnal excesses which drown the ungodly in the waters of destruction—but to those wanderings of mind, to those chills of affection, to those traitorous imaginings, in the indulgence of which, it must be acknowledged you have frequently strayed from the cross.

O, believer, cling to the cross; it is medicine for every malady—it is food through every famine—it is a refuge in every storm—it has sympathies for all your sorrows—and resting beneath its inviting shade, through the vicissitudes of your pilgrimage when you have finished your course, you shall find its holy magnetism sufficiently powerful to draw you up to Heaven and home to Jesus.

Earth is the only world in which the cross, and the Saviour are connected—for in hell there is an everlasting cross without a Saviour, and in heaven there is an everlasting Saviour without a cross. He who is not ashamed of the cross in this life shall wear the crown of glory in the life to come, but the enemies of Jesus shall for ever be clothed with shame: "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life, for my sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it."

Let me feel that I am alone with my guardian angel, and my God, while I muse upon a theme so instructive—let me imagine myself seated on the brow of the hill, Calvary, without a care to perplex me—let me suppose my visit, to the cross, to have been within a few days of the tragic scene, and the affecting circumstances still so fresh upon my mind, as to fit me peculiarly for their contemplation. The song of derision now ended; the mountain no longer polluted with the tread of the savage, or oppressed with the burden of infidelity; the elements of nature hushed into silence, and earth no more disturbed by the opening of the graves; the cruel multitude now far away, and even the tender hearted mother of the Saviour affectionately led from the spot, by the disciple whom Jesus loved.

Let me feel that I am alone with my guardian angel, and my God—that all is still and serene—that my faith is strengthened—that my languishing hopes are revived—that my love is undivided. Let me enjoy more than an occasional glimpse of the manifold excellencies of Him who was crucified; and as the natural sun once "stood still" over Gibeon, at the command of Joshua, may the Sun of Righteousness "stand still," over Calvary, while my spirit lingers in its atmosphere. Saviour! let me have more than a transient light, more than a passing view; let the brightness of thy glory dispel the clouds of worldliness, and let the floating vapours of ignorance be effectually dispersed.

Let me feel that I am alone with my guardian angel, and my God—that my impressions are not the cold conclusions of theory, but the fruit of a glowing experience—that my religion is not temporary excitement—May my heart dance for joy in the immediate effusion of my Redeemer's love, and may I find this eminence to be the shining summit of communion and assurance. May the eyes that were so recently closed in death look upon me—may the tongue that was parched with thirst speak to me—may the countenance that was furrowed with tears smile on me—may the hands that were transfixed to the cross encircle me—may the blood that was shed purify me—may the patience that was

manifested tranquillize me—may the thought of the sin that was then put away, humble me, and the victory then obtained inspire my soul with gratitude and joy. The Lord, the Spirit, teach me some useful lessons at the cross of Christ.

Looking by faith upon the memorable spot, how various the impressions that are made, and how satisfied the mind becomes of her inadequacy to do justice to a subject so complicated. How the words of Milton force themselves upon her memory and breathe their way to heaven, in the stillness of fervent prayer, "What in me is dark, illumine." "What is low; raise and support"—and how the pen of the writer trembles, as though it would sympathize with him in the difficulty of his task.

The cross of Christ suggests to us—"An innocent Sufferer."

There hangs the man of sorrows, the intimate of grief—A spectacle of excruciating and unequalled suffering. All his bones are out of joint; his heart is melted like wax in the midst of his bowels; his strength is dried up like a potsherd; his tongue cleaveth to his jaws, and he is brought into the dust of death. His hands and his feet are nailed to the crucifix; from his pierced side forthwith flows blood and water; his temples are scratched

with the thorns of contempt, and the tears of anguish trickle down his cheeks. His whole frame is convulsed with agony, till the tide of life ceases to flow. The cross itself speaks out the severity of his woes, in the language of the Prophet, "Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by? behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow!"

And this is He, who could blast the fig tree with the breath of his mouth—this is He, who could supply the wants of thousands at a word—this is He, who could walk upon the restless billows of the rugged deep—this is He, who could whisper to the stormy wind and bid its tumult cease—this is He, who by the magic of his look, could make the lame man leap as the hart, could pour the light of day upon the sightless eye, and endow the deaf ear with an acuteness to enjoy the melodies of sound. Yes, this is He, who, while his tears fell upon the grave of Lazarus, could with his voice so penetrate its melancholy chamber, as to raise him from the dead, that with his newly quickened hand of sympathy, he might wipe away the stream of sorrow from a sister's cheek—Behold this living prodigy, a dying sufferer! and wonder.

More, however, is yet to be discovered by a devotional contemplation of the cross. Agony of mind, as well as agony of body. In a condition, only one remove from the madness of entire

despair, this Sufferer exclaims, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Not only was his body sacrificed to the pains of laceration, but his soul was surrendered to the pang of desertion. Not only was he forgotten of his brethren, but forsaken of his Father. This was the acme of his suffering, to be forsaken of God!

The temporary privation of those rich consolations which he had derived, from the Divine presence, throughout his career, was more than he could bear. When he adverted to the approaching era, when his disciples should be scattered, and leave him alone, he subjoins this qualifying and interesting clause "Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." And when the sorrows of Gethsemane gat hold upon him, and the waters of affliction were so deepened that he found it necessary to add greater earnestness to his supplications—for, "being in an agony he prayed more earnestly"—even this cloud was not without a streak of hope; this darkness was not without a ray of light; this prayer was not without a pledge of love; for "he was heard in that he feared" his strong crying and tears were not in vain, but there appeared an angel from heaven strengthening him. Though *there* he had to lament the inconstancy of his friends, the apathy of his slumbering disciples, the iniquity and infidelity of the world at large,

and to tremble beneath the pressure of accumulating woes—yet he had not *there* to mourn, an absent God! Gethsemane, with all its sorrows, never heard the fearful shout, nor did its shady groves ever echo a sentence so desponding as "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me." But Calvary was familiar with it. Calvary heard its long, loud, lingering syllables. Calvary shuddered at its dismal note. All nature mourned in the sackcloth of darkness, and even the rocks refused not to break and to melt, as they listened to its melancholy. Now no Angel to strengthen, now no friend to solace, now no God to deliver. The maddened multitude taunted him, as they thronged around his cross, saying "He saved others, Himself he cannot save." And infernal principalities and powers, precocious in their conclusions, began to sing the song of triumph in their den of rebellion. A fiendish exultation rolled its mistaken syllables through the regions of their sorrow while Beelzebub exclaimed "See, See, the victory is ours" "He is forsaken of God!"

Every child of God must have found that his greatest joy is the Divine presence, and that his deepest sorrow is the withdrawal of the light of the Divine countenance. They who have any Christian experience, well know that they have never been so happy, as when God has caused his face to

shine upon them; and never so cheerless, as when some intervening cloud has obscured their prospect, and suspended their communion—They have found pleasure in the valley of Baca, because God has been with them; and on the other hand, they have been dissatisfied, when surrounded with all that was naturally elevating, because God has seemed to be absent. Then if we as believers, with a body of sin and death, with a nature fallen and depraved, with a principle militating against our refinement of feeling—if we, with all these disadvantages, have found that there is no joy like the joy of the Divine presence, and no sorrow, like the sorrow of an absent or a distant God—how much more powerful must this impression have been upon the mind of One, who had no unholy struggle from within, and no polluted rival to dispute the claims of Deity?

Contemplate this Sufferer as having no momentary inclination to seek happiness out of God—as loving God with all his heart, mind, soul and strength—as counting it his very meat and drink to do the will of him that sent him—as never having experienced one frown from his brow, or any other manifestation than a manifestation of love! And then consider, whether it be not more than easy to conclude, that the travail of his soul, which induced the exclamation, "My God, My

God, why hast thou forsaken me," was the *maximum* of his sorrow, or the *soul* of his agony.

What cross can we not carry?—What temptation can we not surmount? What sorrow can we not welcome, when our heavenly Father is with us? We feel fortified by his presence for all vicissitudes and self-denials. It was this which sustained the apostle Paul, and rendered him so happy and so confident of success, amid a series of privations only exceeded by those of his Lord and Master, now under consideration. He tells us, he was "persecuted" but "*not forsaken*;" and therefore he could smile at every storm, and overcome every hardship, because God was with him. Trials and difficulties tempted him neither to peevishness, nor complaint. Stripes, imprisonments, fastings, labors, tumults, watchings, perils by land, perils by sea, dangers from his own countrymen and from the heathen—all these various forms of self-denial, these conditions of heart-rending sorrow left him exclaiming "If God be for us, who can be against us?" And so far from intimidating him, or rendering him a prey to despondency, we find they rather stimulated his energies, and dictated his exhortation to the church at Galatia "Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." Nothing could inscribe death upon his hopes, or imprint dejection on his brow,

so long as he enjoyed the presence of heaven—And thus we have the sole secret of his contentment, of his exultation, and long suffering, amid circumstances so overwhelming, in the pleasing record he has left us, that he was *not forsaken* of God. And surely we may venture to affirm thus much of the Saviour, or even more. We may affirm that all the persecutions of men, and the opposition of devils; that all the agonies of Gethsemane, and the pangs of Calvary, would have left him with a smiling countenance, and a triumphing spirit, had he not lost the *enjoyment* of the love and favor of his Father. But this he could not endure—this was more than he could bear.

Was it not also the presence of God that sustained the illustrious band of matyrs, amid the most appalling cruelties inflicted upon them? And to what but Divine support can we attribute the fact (which at once embarassed their tormentors, and attested their real faith,) of their having sung the song of triumph in the midst of the furnace, and having expressed the greatest contentment with their station, when their sufferings appeared to be the keenest? They took joyfully, not only the spoiling of their goods, but the mutilation of their bodies, and the sacrifice of their lives. They were rather, on some occasions, too forward than too backward to be put to death, for the sake of

Jesus; and though, persecution in its most awful and sanguinary forms, assailed them, they left the world with such supernatural extacies, as could not fail to impress the consciences of their destroyers, that God was with them. Consequently we have no alternative but to conclude, that as these faithful witnesses, who sealed the truth with their blood, were, through the Divine presence, most elevated when otherwise they would have been peculiarly depressed; and most contented, when dissatisfaction almost made sure of them as its victims—that thus it would have been with this Sufferer, on the cross, had the same mercy been extended, or had the same light and comfort been vouchsafed. And we can only account for his unalleviated anguish, and his unbroken despondency, and the immensity and intensity of his suffering, by a reference to his own agonizing cry, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Here we have a reason for his complaint—an explanation of his discomfort. We find him in the endurance of a most painful desertion, or treated as an exile, and a criminal, by that very Being, in whose bosom he had dwelt, the joy of whose fellowship he had ever realized, and whose absence, till now, he had never deplored. And bearing in mind, that the nearer the relationship, the more

severe the pang of separation, and the closer the former intimacy, the more acute an unusual suspension—connecting with this, the inconceivable oneness, and the unremitting fellowship between the Father and the Son,—we feel convinced, that this channel of his anguish was the broadest, that this avenue of his conflict was the widest, and that his sufferings, in this particular, were, *by him*, found the most pungent, and must be, *by us*, the least understood.

BUT WE MUST NOT OVERLOOK HIS INNOCENCY.

These trials were not brought upon himself, by any personal inadvertency. The approbation of Heaven was not *personally* forfeited when the disapprobation of Heaven was most ostensibly expressed. The character of the Sufferer was unsullied, and its loveliness might ever have slumbered like the fire in the flint, but coming into collision with the touch-stone of trial, *that* loveliness became conspicuous and all might behold it. His life had been as one concatenated chain of celestial excellency—there was the link of sympathy—the link of self-denial—the link of condescension, but who can number them? His word was always truth—his tear was always compassion—

his hand was always friendship—his desire was always holiness—his motive was always love.

The law of God was in his heart, and all its precepts were so plainly advertised in his life that every one might read them. His effort was only to do good. He sought to heal the sick, to comfort the afflicted, to instruct the ignorant and reform the profligate. He went about as the light of the world; the bread of life, and the salt of the earth. The Apostle John, one of his most intimate companions, and affectionate disciples, who had every opportunity of discerning his character, and ascertaining his manner of deportment, has affirmed that "in him was no sin"; and not only was his innocence attested by his friends, but, on several occasions, it was conceded by his enemies. Pilate knew that for envy they had delivered him, and emphatically designated him a "just person", and openly avowed to the Jews, that he could find no fault in him. Judas also, just prior to the completion of his awful career, confessed in the midst of his disappointment and despair "I have betrayed innocent blood." And even the devils were awed by his approach into the admission—"We know thee who thou art, *the holy one* of God; art thou come to destroy us?" But besides these witnesses of his innocency, the voice

had been heard from the excellent glory saying "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"—Thus Heaven, Earth and Hell attested the righteousness of his character, and well knew the holiness of his life. His ardent love for God, and man, his zeal for the service and his submission to the will of his heavenly Father; the tenderness and compassion which he manifested towards his most bitter enemies; the entire control which he had over his own sinless passions; the admirable prudence with which he eluded the temptations by which he was assailed, the wisdom and purity of his arguments, and the elegance and benevolence of his manners; the gentleness with which he reproved, and the patience with which he instructed his disciples—all conspire to confirm the words of the centurion, "Surely this was a righteous man." It is therefore obvious that in reflecting upon this scene of sorrow, we behold an *innocent* Sufferer. And severe as were his sufferings, had his character been otherwise than perfect, they would long since have been forgotten. For the perfection of his character is the perpetuity of his cross. And in its absence, a tragedy which has cheered by its results, the minds of millions; the efficacy of which has borne an innumerable company cheerfully along the rugged sea of pilgrimage to a blessed immortality, and which still lives in

the grateful recollection of every believer, had only been a record of infamy, or a recital of judgment. It might have found a place in the dismals of some Newgate Calendar, but never would have been the sum and substance of the Gospel. But more of this elsewhere.

This is the only instance of absolute innocence, and ignominious suffering, meeting in the same Individual. Perfection and Punishment—Character and Condemnation—Obedience and Death cannot be found away from the cross. Nor can this mystery be solved, why the *Perfect* should be punished, why the *Innocent* should suffer, why the *Obedient* should die—We affirm this unprecedented amalgamation of opposite causes and effects cannot be satisfactorily explained, but as we take another, and a more comprehensive view at the cross itself, the result of which will be found in our next chapter.

Before, however, we conclude this, let us learn one practical and most important lesson from the fact already discussed. If Jesus were an Innocent Sufferer, it will be well to remember

THAT THE INNOCENT MAY SUFFER.

Had we accidentally passed at the time the Redeemer was on the cross, having heard nothing

of his messiahship, having seen none of his miracles, and never having enjoyed the privilege of his converse or his ministry, we should hastily have concluded that he was *guilty*. We should have rashly presumed that he was some malefactor; and that being in such a degrading attitude, he must have violated the laws of the nation. We should probably have supposed him a robber or a traitor, as finding him suspended between them. At least had we enquired of the surrounding mob, concerning him, we should in all probabilities have believed their report. Seeing him among the vilest, we should have pronounced him vile, and have judged that he would never have been thus traduced and punished, had he done nothing amiss.

And yet all these surmises would have been painfully inaccurate, all these conclusions would have been impious and precipitous. For although he was the subject of so much misrepresentation, the victim of so much scandal and shame, he had done no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. The best of men among the worst—"he was numbered with the transgressors"—and though immaculate in nature and blameless in deportment, the byword of the profligate and profane!

Should not this teach us the danger of arriving at hasty and *ex parte* conclusions; and impress us

with the propriety of obtaining good evidence, before we believe, or circulate a report, prejudicial to the character and comfort of another. Nor do we know an error, in our day, more prevalent, than an *unguarded credulity* which seems almost to invite erroneous rumour, and to thrive upon fiction.

A man may sin by believing too much, as well as by believing too little. There are some whose chief delight is to misrepresent and to cause mischief; therefore let us be careful how we encourage them in their degrading service, by a willingness to credit them. In the case of Joseph, let it be remembered, his unjust imprisonment was the consequence of hasty conclusion. It is true, a piece of his garment, being in the possession of Potiphar's wife, seemed to confirm her fabrication, and to leave him no hope of justice on the occasion; nevertheless he was faultless. Indeed that fragment which was the most powerful witness against him *before men*, was the pledge of his innocency *before God.* Man looked upon it as a *proof of uncleanness*, God looked upon it as the *test of purity.* Report was circulated and believed, and its injured victim incarcerated, but the Sufferer was innocent!

Such a circumstance as this, infallibly sustained as it is by the inspiration of God, demands the

utmost stretch of Christian charity where the reputation of another is concerned; and urges the most anxious tenacity in turning an accuser of the brethren, and in saying "Thou art the man"—When shall we leave off magnifying the faults of others, and spend that time in suppressing our own which we have too long spent in circulating their's? When shall we deal so faithfully with our brother, as to go first to him with any report that may be prejudicial to his character, to ascertain its accuracy instead of believing it without *evidence*, and advertizing it without *limit*? When shall we be suspicious of the caluminator, and turn a deaf ear so constantly to his loquacity, as to weary him in his censurable pursuit?

When will the various sections of the church of Christ live out the importunity of St. Paul, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and all evil speaking be put away from you with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you?" When will Christian charity learn to think no evil? And when will "unruly and vain talkers and deceivers" wear the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price?

When shall we place a proper estimate upon character, and ceasing to play with it, as though

it were bought and sold in our market places, in a moment, with a handful of pelf, appreciate that emphasis which was laid upon it, by one who was a stranger to Christianity, when he observed,

> " Who steals my purse, steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
> 'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
> But he that filches from me my good name,
> Robs me of that, which not enriches him,
> And makes me poor indeed:"

However if false reports must be circulated, and character be impeached, there is some peculiar consolation in the fact, that the Captain of our salvation was misrepresented from his cradle to his cross—the most holy yet the most hated—the most faultless, yet the first to be assailed with the most flagrant aspersions. Nor is it to be wondered that his followers should share in his reproaches, or that the same spirit, dwelling in them, should meet with the same repugnance and hostility, as he experienced before them—"The servant is not greater than his Lord, if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you"—May we in all our crosses cultivate the same submission, and like our Master, aiming to free our walk from all inconsistency, we shall be able to bear, with an open face, all undeserved accusations.

Too many love to speak evil of others; and a large proportion of the community appear to live,

for no other purpose, than to set men at variance with each other. They go about with the poisonous tongue of the talebearer for this very end, and too frequently, even the sanctuary, becomes the altar on which character is sacrificed. As they retire from public service, instead of meditating upon their spiritual benefits, and examining themselves by what they have heard, they descend to the coldness of a selfish criticism upon their minister, or to the sinfulness of strife among themselves.

Against such characters we should ever be on our guard—ignorant of our real principles they will attribute to us motives that are base and dishonourable; and in proportion as we rise in moral excellence and spiritual prosperity, they will augment the violence of their attacks. They will do infinite mischief in families by their crafty whisperings, and in churches they will sow the seed of the most cruel animosities. Such are idle, wandering about from house to house, and of them it may truly be said "Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit; thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son."—From such withdraw thyself.

Nevertheless it is not necessary that good men should connive at the inconsistencies of any, lest

they be thought uncharitable and severe. We are called upon to reprove the unfruitful works of darkness wherever we discover them. And frequently, in order to vindicate our personal innocency, it may be requisite to unfold the improprieties of others. Only let us be careful that we do so "with faltering steps and slow," with a heavy heart that we are compelled to the painful exposure, and not with an inward satisfaction that we have censures to pronounce. If we are moved by a conscientious regard for the glory of God, by the dignity of true religion, by the welfare of the brethren, and the clearing of ourselves, to charge home the blemishes of others—we shall be fully justified. But if, on the contrary, our aim is to plant a root of bitterness, to sow the seed of discord, or simply to visit evil with evil, we shall be condemned in such a course. And never let us conceal any good qualities of those, whose follies and guiltiness we are obliged to expose—giving them the full advantage of any redeeming feature we can discern.

It may also be necessary to mention the fraudulent way in which many who "suffer justly" endeavour to justify themselves, or to comfort themselves in their inconsistencies. In the heat of temper, they will say "Well, my Saviour, suffered innocently before me, and if charges were brought against him

I must expect they will be adduced against me;" or words to that effect. Thus they blind themselves that they may think well of themselves; and even should a large community be against them, it is said to be mistaken, and themselves unblameable. They would hide their own faults behind their Saviour's virtues, or insidiously fold their own transgressions in the mantle of his perfect obedience. And because he suffered *innocently*, would thereby exculpate themselves when they suffer *justly*.

Whereas the temper they manifest; the hard speeches they utter; the bold accusations and revilings they heap upon others; their abstinence from the means of grace, under the treachery of a selfish and party spirit—severally prove that they have no fellowship with Christ in their sufferings; or else they would possess a kindred disposition of forbearance and meekness, and demonstrate that they had learned of him "Who when he was reviled, reviled not again, who when he suffered threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." "They who suffer for "well doing" will ever suffer *patiently*; however much their minds may be pained, or their feelings wounded, they will forcibly attest their innocence by their propriety and patience. The sympathies of Christ will aid them in their undeserved

reproaches, and they will have grace equal to their day. Nor can any sign of innocency be more infallible and apparent than when a burden of invective and malice is borne with a gentleness that disdains revenge, and a dignity that forbids retaliation. While on the contrary, there is no greater proof of some degree of guilt in the party accused, when all his corrupt passions are inflamed by the accusation, and he would cruelly attempt to wreak his revenge on another, regardless of truth.

CHAPTER II.

THE ATONING SACRIFICE.

The cross of Christ suggests—An atoning Sacrifice.

The recognition of this fundamental principle, as connected with the death of our dear Redeemer involves the necessity of the union between innocency and suffering to which we have already alluded. For if we dispense with innocency, we have no acceptable sacrifice; and if we dispense with suffering, we have no valid atonement. Perfection only could atone for imperfection. Sanctity alone could remove Sin.

Thus upon the supposition that the human nature of our Lord was fallen, the offering up of that human nature could not possibly expiate. And instead of being a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour, as the Apostle declares; it would have been a polluted and an offensive immolation. Men may imagine they do Christ service by pronouncing his human nature to have been *fallen*, and that they extol him by main-

taining his uniform resistance, and absolute conquest over his own corruptions. Whereas, leaving the simplicity of Holy Scripture for their mistaken theorems, they entertain views which, if orthodox, would have unfitted him for the express work he came to accomplish.

His human nature was created into union with his Divine Person, therefore how could it be fallen? It was the production of the Holy Ghost, therefore how could it be polluted? His miraculous incarnation was for this purpose—to present One in the nature of sinners, who being himself *without sin*, should be able to remove sin; and who bearing forth the image of God before a *guilty* world, should be able to convey that image to all his members. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

We apprehend the nature which the eternal Word took into union with his Divine Person was the precise nature in which God originally created Adam—free from all contamination, and without an inward inclination after evil. It differed not in moral qualities but solely in circumstances. For instance, Adam was created in the natural state of *manhood;* Jesus was born as a *babe.* Adam was introduced into a sinless

sphere; Jesus came into a world lying in wickedness. Adam only could behold beauty; Jesus looked upon deformity. Adam could only hear the music of peace and contentment; Jesus heard the dissonance of strife and revenge. Adam could find no room for lamentation; Jesus came to weep. Adam was surrounded by that which God had pronounced "very good;" Jesus appeared when all flesh had corrupted its way.

The *circumstances* therefore under which the first Adam, and the second Adam were introduced into our world were extremely dissimilar. But they do not for a moment invalidate an identity of nature, or infer a disparity in moral quality or character. We can easily suppose a sinless seraph to visit this region of sorrow and sighing, without any transition from the *un*-fallen to the fallen. Yet having left a world of perfection and glory for one of wretchedness and woe, there would neccessarily be an exchange of circumstances. He would be tempted and persecuted—grieved with the scenes of depravity he witnessed—afflicted with the miseries of a perishing populace—and all his senses, instead of being delighted, as formerly, with the beauties of the *celestial*, would be offended with the displays of the *infernal*. Still his nature might be unfallen; and the very fact of its being immaculate would

augment his disquietude and misery in an element of wickedness.

Thus it was with our divine Redeemer. But though a sinful world was his theatre of tragedy—though a sinful woman was his Mother—though a sinful mob was his constant annoyance, and Satan himself his malicious Tempter—he maintained the holiness of his nature in its native dignity and sublimity, and neither the severity of its mortifications, nor the protraction of its sufferings, nor the violence and revenge of its adversaries, could blight its innocence and loveliness, so necessary to its sacrificial worth.

Jesus was the promised seed of the woman, which was to bruise the serpent's head—he was the ark of salvation in which his exposed church was to be safely borne above the raging billows of destruction—he was the Isaac whose day Abraham saw afar off, and was glad—he was the burden of David's sonorous harp, and its chords were never swept so harmoniously as when they were swept to his praise—he was the glory of Isaiah whose pen of inspiration so beautifully pourtrayed his incarnation and sufferings—he was the Messiah whom Daniel declared should be "cut off, but not for himself"—And therefore when we behold him in the centre of the cross, we behold not an event having no relation to the past, but one with which former

ages had been deeply concerned, though they but faintly perceived it. The substance of all former shadows, the burden of all former prophecies, the fulfilment of all former promises is, in such a spectacle, presented to our wondering minds.

The immutable Justice of God required such a Sacrifice.

Without shedding of blood there could be no remission. And "the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, could never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect." Victim after victim had been slain—sacrifice after sacrifice had been offered—sin after sin had been confessed—but the sword of Justice was still uplifted, and prepared to smite. Successive immolations implied their own inefficiency, and announced the necessity of an effectual offering. And this alone could be provided by the assumption of man's nature, on the part of one of the Divine Persons in the infinite Godhead. God must become incarnate, or sinners be unsaved! The offended Legislator must effect a reconciliation, or the breach must be eternal! Thus the great mystery of Godliness, so long in the embryo of purpose, was openly proclaimed, and "God was manifest in the flesh."

The stain of sin was one which the blood of Incarnate God only could efface—the demand was one which that blood only could satisfy—the guilt was such as that blood only could cancel, and the partition wall so formidable that that blood only could undermine and abolish it. O! the preciousness of that blood, without which the earth had been but an enlargement of hell—God and man eternal enemies—curses co-extensive with criminals, and condemnation universal. O! the preciousness of that blood which makes the blessings of salvation and forgiveness as absolutely *certain*, through its efficacy, as they would have been absolutely *impossible*, in its absence.

The holiness of the law is as dear to Deity as the holiness of the Gospel. His justice is as immutable as his grace. It was not therefore enough to pardon sinners, as by an act of sovereignty, or to perfect sinners as by an act of power; but provision must be made for the honor of the Lawgiver, for the satisfaction of his claims, and the purity of his government. God can no more save a man unjustly, than he can condemn a man unjustly—and this accounts for the indispensableness of that sacrificial system, which implicated the sufferings and death of his own beloved Son.

Now without this atoning Sacrifice, we should

look in vain for that discrimination between sanctity and sin, between good and evil; or for that connection between obedience and bliss, between disobedience and death, so prominently displayed in the economy which revelation discloses! Annihilate the cross, and how do we know that God, in loving mercy, is the friend of justice? Annihilate the cross, and how can there be even the semblance of harmony between the law and the gospel? But when we gaze upon the cross, and behold an atoning Sacrifice; when we see the curse of the law spending itself upon the devoted Victim; when we see the spotless Son of God, drinking the cup of indignation, and enduring the blast of Divine vengeance; when we behold him bruised for our iniquities, wounded for our transgressions, and his immaculate soul made an offering for our sins—we then discover the fatal consequences of moral evil, and the impossibility of union, or of compromise between holiness and wickedness. We then perceive that the law is not outraged by the gospel, that sin is not palliated even by transfer, and that the Arm of Salvation is nerved with Justice, while it is clad with Power. We then distinguish between the sinner and his sins; and know that while the sinner is spared, the sin is visited—while the sinner is pardoned, the sin is punished—while the sinner has a smile, the sin is frowned upon—while the

sinner is embosomed, the sin is abandoned. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

Christ's voluntary susception of the office of Priest required such a Sacrifice.

When the Father put the momentous question, Who will stand in the gap, and endure the curse which sin has deserved; and which must be sustained, if the streams of salvation flow towards offending man? Angels stood silent, themselves incompetent to interpose, nor aware a Mediator could be found. No creature could suggest any other course than that the sons of men, having universally sinned, must universally suffer. That every criminal must be eternally cut off from those resources of happiness and glory which dwell in Deity; and that man having made himself an outcast from heaven must become an inmate of hell.

If ever the melodious praises of the hierarchy were hushed into a saddening silence, it must have been then. When the case of the sinner appeared, to them, too desperate to be relieved, and when

the polluting stains of his transgressions seemed too deep to be cancelled. When the thunderbolt of vengeance uttered its earliest melancholy, as the precursor of utter ruin and despair upon the whole human race. If heaven *could* know an interval of dejection, if a transient moment of sorrow *could* steal upon its eternity of joy, it would have been when the awful condition of apostate man appeared to the angels incurable.

Mercy weeps over fallen sinners, and mourns over rebellious man—her heart bleeds at the thought of their exile from God, and her sighs are the outward advertizers of her inward anguish. She gains an audience with the Deity, and thus implores. Father! forgive them. Father! forgive them—pass by the fault—view them as though they had never sinned—shut them not up in the prison of despair, in those regions of sorrow, where "torment ever urges" and "where hope never comes"—let not thy vengeful thunderbolts transfix them in the bottomless abyss, where immortality mourns for death, but mourns in vain; and where consciousness covets insensibility but cannot obtain it. O, Father forgive them, and admit them to heaven. Art thou not a God of goodness? let thy goodness prevail. Art thou not a God of love? let thy love induce thee. Art thou not a God of peace? let peace be restored. Art

thou not a God of pity? let pity spread her wings, descend to the valley of trespass and of woe, and bear the sinner upward to thy throne.

She pauses to weep, overcome with the pitiful condition of unworthy man. When Justice rises and appeals to Mercy. Am I not as perfect as thou? Am I not dear to Heaven as thou? Are we not precious to each other? If thou hast claims, I have claims; if thou hast a cause to advocate, I have a cause to advocate; if thou shed tears at the thought of offending man, behold my tears at the thought of an offended God; if thou weep over a law breaker, let me weep over a broken law; if thou desire remission, let me desire atonement. Man has fallen, man has rebelled, man has made himself the enemy of God, man is the source of his own woe and condemnation. And unless the law be honoured and fulfilled; unless the curse be endured and exhausted; unless the perfection of the human character be restored, no human foot shall ever tread the courts of glory, nor shall a sinner's eye behold the smiling face of God. Mercy thou art my Friend, my Equal, my Companion, but sin must be removed.

Thus Justice ends. When, lo! a voice from the Lamb, in the midst of the throne, interrupted the momentous pause, and upon its decision depended the eternal destinies of millions. "Here am I,

send me," rolled its inspiring music through the celestial arches, nor had the echo ceased before the same voice exclaimed "Lo I come, in the volume of the book, it is written of me, I delight to do thy will O my God; yea thy law is within my heart." Jesus interposes thus; Mercy, I love thee! Justice, I love thee! both dear to Deity, myself divine! Mercy, thou shalt be built up for ever. Justice, thou shalt be the habitation of the heavenly throne. Mercy, thou shalt have thy desire. Justice, thou shalt have thy due. Mercy, dry thy tears. Justice, sheathe thy sword. Mercy, thou shalt see salvation. Justice, thou shalt have satisfaction. Mercy! Justice! kiss each other. My name is Jesus.

Thus when the fulness of time was come, "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." "And what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." The Lord Jesus having undertaken to fulfil the office of Priest, and to offer a sacrifice commensurate with the requisitions of divine holiness, and to effect an atonement which should appease divine justice, would

not shrink from the accomplishment of his undertaking. "He was not a man that he should lie nor the son of man that he should repent." The enterprize of redemption was the sum and substance of his mission, and neither the wrath of God against sin, nor the temptations and oppositions of legions of devils, nor the assaults and ingratitude of men could daunt his zeal, or deter him from that miracle of mercy on which he came. Thus he welcomed the eclipse of his own glory for a while—patiently endured the contradiction of sinners against himself—braved the powers of hell and the principalities of earth, and counted not his life dear, so that he might finish the work which was given him to do, and ransom sinners to God.

In this sense the contemptuous language of his enemies was the language of truth. "HIMSELF HE CANNOT SAVE." It was not for want of power; for he had all power in heaven and in earth. It was not that he was proof against suffering; for he possessed the keenest susceptibilities. It was not that he had been suddenly arrested, and could find no way of escape; for he knew that his hour was come, and could have concealed himself had he wished. But he was bound by covenant engagements; he had passed his word, in the court of heaven, for the salvation of his church; he had agreed to be faithful unto death, and therefore

he knew there was no alternative but passively to submit. He knew that his life must be forfeited, that his blood must be shed, and that for this same purpose he was manifested "that he might destroy the works of the devil." Thus in saving others, he could not save himself.

Hence we are told "He hath made him to be sin *for us*, who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "That he died the *just* for the *unjust*, that he might bring us to God." "That the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of *us* all." "That he was delivered for *our* offences and raised for *our* justification." From which it is apparent that his sufferings arose not from his personal relation as the Son of God, or from any personal imperfection discoverable either in his nature or his life; but from the fact of his having graciously stood forth, as the Servant of the Covenant, and as the Mediator between God and man. He was not a Sacrifice because he was a Sufferer, but he was necessarily a Sufferer when he became a Sacrifice. And all his privations, all his sorrows and his sighs, must consequently be traced to his public relation, as "the Head of the church, and the Saviour of the body."

Thus through his death we have life—through

his poverty we are made rich—his groans issue in our songs—his tears in our smiles—his pangs in our bliss. He descended into the depths of the grave, that we might climb the heights of glory. He endured the misery, that we might enjoy the mercy. He was fettered that we might be freed. His blood was shed, that in its application to our adamantine hearts, they might be melted.

O! that our faith may apprehend this atoning Sacrifice; that day by day, we may gaze at the centre of the cross; that we may live beneath its shadow, and that the blood of the offering may continually drop upon our consciences, purging them from dead works to serve the living God. That we may be taught to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live righteously and soberly in this present evil world. And that we may be enabled to keep our evil propensities in perpetual subjugation; that sin may not have dominion over us, and that Satan may not gain an advantage through our departure from the cross. Here is our Life—here is our strength—here is our safety—Why then should we leave it?

"The cross once seen is death to every vice,
Else he who hung there, suffered all his pain,
Groaned, bled and died, and agonized in vain."

What a mercy to be delivered from the scepticism of the Jews! They saw the sufferer, but denied his innocence; they were close by the cross, but had no faith in the sacrifice. How clearly does this prove that the cross must be *spiritually* discerned, or it cannot be discerned at all, either as to its sympathies or its energies. Then shall they know, if they follow on to know the Lord. Precious Saviour, keep us at thy cross, until we wear the crown.

Having thus contemplated our divine Redeemer, in the capacity of "an atoning Sacrifice," we may deduce from such considerations, perhaps, the most important and the most comforting of all truisms

THAT SIN MAY BE FORGIVEN.

This inscrutable mystery, transcending all others in respect to the consolation it ministers, can only be learned at the cross. "Nature is Christian, preaches to mankind," but Nature reveals no atonement for sin. The feathered songsters that mingle their melodies in the forests, when the inspiring sweet south-west just puts the leaves and the twigs into motion, testify a God of power, of wisdom and of providence. Indeed the whole Creation teems with his excellency, and were our nature unimpaired by moral evil, every depart-

ment would supply a temple for his worship. Nevertheless away from the cross, we have no tidings of "a God pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin," nor can we discern the face of reconciliation.

Faith fixes upon the cross, enjoys the efficacy of the sacrifice, and reads in the blood of the Saviour's heart that sin may be forgiven. And thus the cross, notwithstanding all its ignominy, exceeds in its developments all the schools of philosophy, and all the discoveries of genius; and the circumscribed spot, upon which it was fixed, proclaims more of the mysterious, and more of the merciful, to an apostate world, than the whole universe beside.

> "Here the whole Deity is seen,
> Nor can a creature guess,
> Which of the glories brightest shine,
> The justice or the grace."

Compared with this, all other information is unimportant. Unless we know that transgression is removed, we know nothing upon which solid happiness can be grounded. Unless we receive the boon of forgiveness, we are poor, miserably poor, with all our possessions. And without the witness of the Holy Spirit, this knowledge can never be attained; for the mere fact that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," full

as it is of love and mercy in the *general*, affords no *personal* peace and satisfaction, until it is brought, by the Divine Comforter, in all its fulness and its freeness, to the mind of the transgressor.

Here is comfort for every broken hearted sinner; *Sin may be forgiven!* What good news is this for the sin stung conscience! "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." No ground for self-confidence, yet no reason for despair. The fountain is open for sin and uncleanness, and every one that hungers and thirsts may come in the full assurance of a gracious reception. All that are weary and heavy laden are invited, and the most dejected in themselves may here find an antidote. How many deprive themselves of the consolation which the free invitations of Jesus are calculated to supply, by the supposition that they must obtain some previous fitness, or first cultivate some excellency that shall win the Divine admiration—whereas without Christ there can be no righteousness or strength, and without a personal approach to him, and a personal supply from his fulness, nothing spiritual can be obtained. Not so much as grace to perform the smallest duty, or resolution to resist the slightest temptation.

Sin may be forgiven! Advancing hourly as we

are, to the awful day of judgment, when the affectionate invitation "Come ye blessed," or the portentous sentence "Depart ye cursed" shall be addressed to every human being—rapidly approaching the presence of the Judge of quick and dead, whose decision will be *final*, what less intelligence than the pardon of sin can inspire our hopes, or dismiss our fears? Convinced that our name is sinner, that our nature is unclean, and that all our habits are naturally evil, how can we indulge the expectation of acquittal at this last assize, but as we *receive* the remission of our sins? How vain to attempt to derive happiness in forgetting the future! How foolish to struggle against the consideration of its approaching events! Rather let us aim to meet our God, in the face of Jesus, day by day, and then we shall meet him, on the throne of judgment, without confusion; let us wait for his smile of forgiving love, in the means he has appointed, and then we shall carry the pledge of his favor whenever we are summoned; let us listen for his voice, "I even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins," and then we shall "both hope and quietly wait" for his salvation. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered; blessed is the man unto

whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile."

Too many express themselves thus:—"We have nothing to do with the future." But it is necessary to discriminate, before we admit the truth of such an assertion. As far as the future is *concealed*, we have nothing to do with it, and should not indulge in unguarded speculations upon it—but as far as the future is *revealed* we have much to do with it, and should not overlook it as superfluous.

The revelation of God includes the past, the present, and the future. Thus as we have to do with the *whole* revelation, we are concerned in them all. Had it pleased the Divine Being, he could have supplied a fresh revelation to each generation; excluding the past, omitting the future, and only embodying what pertains to the present. But since it has pleased Him to include "from eternity to eternity;" to communicate things "in the beginning" and "from the beginning;" and further to make known what shall succeed "the wondrous end of all things;" he has hereby implicated us in the past, present, and to come.

The Bible therefore is the passage from eternity to eternity—the remembrancer of the past, the expositor of the present, and the revealer of the future. Looking into its sacred pages, we discover

circumstances that transpired, and purposes that were resolved, before the wheels of time were framed, and as well do we ascertain, to a great extent, what will be the sequel when the material mechanism is entirely dissolved. Thus it is obvious we have much to do with the future, as far as it is *revealed.* And surely we can discover the goodness and compassion of God, in having determined that matters so important, and subjects so momentous, should not rush upon us in the suddenness of a moment, but that being forewarned of them, and frequently urged to their contemplation, we should be prepared to meet them, and their manifold solemnities, without terror and despair.

We have therefore *every day* to do with the day of our death—we have *already* to do with the dissolution of the body, and the departure of the soul for another sphere of consciousness—we have *already* to do with the day of resurrection, and *already* to enquire devotionally, whether we shall rise to honor or dishonor—we have *already* to call to mind the day of judgment, the opening of the books, and the assemblage of the whole of our species, before the face of God, the Judge of all—we have *already* to ascertain, by the volume of inspiration, whether we shall be saved or lost! It is *already* our main business to enquire, whether our sins have been forgiven!

To postpone these reflections is the most dangerous insanity, and the most fatal negligence. Let us bring near in thought, the day of death, the day of resurrection, and the day of judgment, that they may not come upon us unawares. If, however, we do not bring them near *in thought*, they will soon approach us *in reality*, and then unless sin be pardoned, and transgression removed, they will only blight our false imaginations and leave us, but too sensibly, to feel the anguish of our past apathy. "Sin forgiven" is the only antidote against the sadness of the day of death; against the discoveries of the day of resurrection; and against the awfulness of the day of judgment.

Sin may be forgiven! Therefore let every sinner who is convinced of the exceeding sinfulness, and the exceeding helplessness of human nature, adore the grace that has made known a remedy. Let him not tarry lest he should presume, but rather let him hasten to the cross that his fears may be scattered, and his tears restrained. "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared," may be his morning and evening song, while he aims to keep his heart with all diligence, and ponders the path of his feet. And living by faith, though he may tremble the greater part of his journey, and often feel the burden of a body of

sin and death, he shall at last appear in glory "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

But though we learn from the sacrifice of Christ, the cheering truth that "sin can be forgiven," we learn quite as forcibly, that

Sin could not be forgiven without an atonement.

Why did Jesus suffer, if salvation could have been dispensed without it? What means the cross, and its most appalling voice, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me," if an atonement were not necessary? Can we believe that the great mystery of godliness would ever have involved the sufferings and agonies of Christ, if another design could have been projected, equally worthy of the Divine holiness, and those severities have been avoided?

We must infer that the Father so loved the Son that he would have spared him, that he would never have made his soul an offering for sin, that he would never have removed from him the sense of his love, could he have saved sinners irrespective of such a process. It is true we are told, "with God all things are possible," but we are also told that "he cannot deny himself" "that he

cannot lie." Therefore while we concede to him the power of doing every thing, and affirm he can do all things, we deem it no contradiction to maintain that he can do nothing contrary to his nature, or subversive of his perfections.

Thus when we say—Sin could not be forgiven without an atonement, we place no limit upon the effort of the Almighty, beyond that which he himself has placed, in the record he has given us. And as he has therein told us that "he cannot deny himself" we must be perfectly safe in believing the communication. The impossibility of saving sinners without an atonement is not however a negation of Divine Power, but rather a vindication of Divine holiness.

But who can picture to himself the meek and holy Redeemer, bending his knee and pouring forth his fervent prayers in Gethsemane? Who can hear that stirring application, enough to move both heaven and earth, "Father if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt?" Who can contemplate such an appeal, connecting the utmost fervency with the most entire resignation, and suppose that, if it had been possible, the cup would not have been removed?

It is very evident, in such an expression, our Saviour did not refer to the *abstract power* of God.

When he said "If it be possible" he could not mean "if thou art able," or "if thou art willing;" for he well knew that his Father loved him, and that he was able to do all things. But he doubtless referred to that economy which was agreed upon before the foundation of the world, and to the harmony of the Divine perfections in the plan of redemption, which he desired by no means either to invade or impeach. Thus we conclude the tenor or import of his prayer to have been this—If thou can spare me and save sinners; if thou can cause the cup to pass from me, and yet effect the salvation of the church, worthy of Thyself, O Father, so let it be. But if not, if I *must* drink it; if I *must* go to the cross; if I *must* yet sink deeper and deeper in those waters of tribulation, "Not my will but thine be done."

Surely therefore, on the one hand, the character of God, and on the other hand the entire submission of Christ, demand us to conclude that had it been possible, the cup would have passed from him; that could sinners have been saved without an atonement, they would; and that if abstract power, and sovereignty, had sufficed in the mystery of the remission of our sins, there would have been no atoning Sacrifice,—no bleeding substitute—no divine indignation—no cross.

Thus to seek the forgiveness of sins, without reference to the atonement—to look for the mercy of God away from the cross—to expect remission without shedding of blood, is to deceive our own souls, to feed our pride, to contravene holy Scripture, and to oppose the perfections of God to each other. Whereas to pray for pardon through a Saviour's sufferings—to look for eternal life through his blood and righteousness—to hope for acquittal, and even for justification, through his obedience and death, is an employment adapted to immortality, commended by revelation, and is connected with the blissful and perpetual embrace of a forgiving God.

"Upon the summit of Mount Calvary
They rear his cross; conspicuous there it stands
An ensign of salvation to the world.
Kneel, all ye Christian nations! bow your hearts
And worship your Redeemer, in whose death
Ye live, and from whose issuing wounds flows life,
By his blood purchas'd; hope's best promise flows
Of joys immortal for the just reserved."

CHAPTER III.

THE AFFECTIONATE SAVIOUR.

The cross of Christ suggests, an affectionate Saviour.

The most poignant sufferings and the most costly sacrifices are not necessarily saving. For we can imagine much suffering without character, and many sacrifices without atoning efficacy. And had this been the case in relation to the sufferings and sacrifice of the Son of God, he would never have been distinguished by the title "Mighty to save." Therefore in maintaining the saving worth of our Lord's voluntary sacrifice, we must establish its superiority over all sacrifices that had preceded it.

And this is obvious from the fact of our Lord *having offered up himself.* "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me." In this respect his offering differed from all others.

The priests under the law offered not themselves, but what was inferior to themselves, and what could not take away sin, and was therefore repeated; but Christ offered himself, his whole human nature, body and soul, and both as in union with his Divine Person. This was acceptable to God; hereby justice was satisfied, sin removed, the law fulfilled and magnified, and salvation completely obtained. And thus the perfection of his priesthood, and its superiority over the Levitical one was fully demonstrated.

The nature that sinned must be the nature to suffer. The blood of an animal could not atone for the sin of an intelligent. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise himself took part of the same." "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Had other priests offered up themselves, they would have been guilty of self-destruction; and the sacrifice, instead of being acceptable to God, would have brought down his eternal indignation; but of this Priest, it may be said, he took our nature expressly to put away

our sins, by devoting it as a sacrifice on the cross. He took a human life that he might die an ignominious death.

And the immaculacy of the human nature was as necessary to the efficacy of the sacrifice, as was the union of the divine. Therefore by his mysterious incarnation, he escaped the taint of moral evil, and was the "holy child Jesus" from the womb of the virgin. He was not born in sin, or shapen in iniquity, though he came into a sinful world, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. He was holy, harmless, and undefiled, and the holiness of his nature greatly fitted him to be our High Priest, Advocate and Intercessor. Being God, as well as man, there was a sufficient virtue in all his actions and sufferings, to answer what they designed. And being man, as well as God, he had a sacrifice to offer, and was capable of giving that satisfaction, as our substitute, which the holy law of God required.

All other sacrifices were, comparatively, as cyphers; and just as the multiplication of cyphers never can produce an unit, so the repetition of these sacrifices could never furnish an atonement commensurate with the claims of the offended Legislator. All other sacrifices were as shadows; and just as the endless combination of shadows cannot compose a substance, so the daily regard

to these immolations under the law, could effect no substantial or effectual atonement for sin. "But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

Hereby he effected what the ceremonial law, for many centuries had said *ought* to be effected; hereby he suffered what animal sacrifices long had said *ought* to be suffered; and hereby he did what former priests had said *ought* to be done, but could not do. Taking away the first, he established the second. Abolishing its weakness, he substituted his own strength; and removing its inefficiencies, with his own arm brought Salvation. Their sacrifices implied that sin existed; his sacrifice declared that sin was for ever put away. Their sacrifices implied that God was offended; his sacrifice declared that God was reconciled. Their sacrifices kept sin in remembrance; his sacrifice cast sin into endless oblivion. Their sacrifices allowed the claims of Justice; his sacrifice revealed the charms of Mercy.

O! the glorious superiority of his one oblation over their innumerable offerings. O! the ineffable

worth of his substantial and final sacrifice, over their continual remembrancers! They were only his forerunners to tell of his mission; they announced the necessity of his advent, but could not be his substitute. They were priests whose hands were imbrued in blood, that could not save; but he was the great High Priest, whose blood speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, and in whose sacrifice the believer not only discovers a Priest, but a Saviour!

The law revealed its precepts; they were written in his heart, and he loved them and pursued them with all his strength. The law revealed its penalties, not incurred personally by him, but by the iniquities of those for whom he had covenanted; he listened to them, he sighed over them, he wept at the thought of them, but he could not dispute them. They were heavy, but not unjust; he took them to his cross, and there satisfied them with the fountain of his blood. Thus having been "made perfect through sufferings, he became the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him." And is able to save to the uttermost.

There is also much practical good resulting from the consideration of the superiority of our Lord's sacrifice over every other, and the necessity of its atoning efficacy in order that his title as Saviour may be sustained. For otherwise we

should be sceptical of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and impugn its consequences, as revealed to us in the word of God.

Who could think much of the evil of sin, if it could be atoned by the blood of a goat? Who would deem it ruinous, if it could be pardoned by the offering of a bullock? Then every man after sinning at his pleasure, and habitually indulging his carnal propensities, would avow his ability to find his own sacrifice, and to be his own Priest. He would sin through his threescore years and ten, and at the eleventh hour bring his thousands of rams, and his ten thousands of rivers of oil, as his passport to heaven. He would presume to live the life of the wicked, and yet hope to die the death of the righteous. He would run the downward road, and yet aspire to a throne in glory. He would make no account of accumulated transgressions, intending to expiate them all, with a paltry sacrifice, involving no self denial, at the close of his days.

But when the mind is impressed that atonement to be effectual must have DIVINITY for its basis, and INCARNATE DEITY for its sacrifice—when we feel that the only begotten Son of God, the God and Man-Mediator must interpose with his blood; that there can be no salvation in any other; and that without this mysterious

oblation, sinners universally must perish—when we are assured that no less of Divine condescension, that no less an outlay, that no system less supreme could expiate human guilt, or secure fallen man a pathway to glory, we are overpowered in our conceptions of the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

What a mountain must that be which only Deity can demolish! What a disease must that be which only the blood of incarnate God can remove! What a tremendous evil must that be, for which no antidote could be found in the aggregate wisdom, and purity, and obedience of Cherubim, and Seraphim, but which could only be obviated by the agony and bloody sweat, by the cross and passion, by the obedience and death of Immanuel! Let us then charge our souls not to entertain, superficially, the evil of sin; let us behold its blackness in the blood of Christ; let us learn something of its tremendous consequences in the tremendous sacrifice which could alone remove it; let us read its hostility to the divine government, and the impossibility of its palliation, and the irreconcileableness of its indulgence with a life of faith, and a profession of Christianity, in the sighs and tears, the groans and wounds, of Jesus! Above all, let us tremble at its enormity in the recollection of its most awful results as depicted in his agonizing ninth-hour cry, "Eli,

Eli, lama sabacthani." "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

AND WHO CAN BE SCEPTICAL OF HIS LOVE?

He is not only a Saviour, but an affectionate Saviour. He saved his people not to display his matchless power, but to manifest his changeless love.

Affectionate! What an interesting adjective! Who can overlook its sympathy, or its sweetness? Such a word should be found in the dictionary of every domestic circle, and its musical syllables should breathe their blessings through each earthly relationship. And if so, how can it be dispensed with, where Christ is named? How can it be forgotten where the cross is planted? Or who can fail to discover it in the agonies of the Redeemer?

It would deviate too much from our theme, otherwise we might trace his love from his incarnation to his ascension; and pleasing would it be to instance its various manifestations. "Made a little lower than the Angels;" Here is love! "Wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger;" Here is love! Employing himself in mechanical labour; Here is love! Instructing the ignorant, healing the sick, curing all manner of diseases; Here is love! Wiping the tear of

sorrow from the mournful eye of the widow; Here is love! Bathing his disciples' feet; Here is love! Wrestling in Gethsemane; Here is love! Bearing his cross to the brow of the hill; Here is love!

But Calvary tells it most eloquently—here is the eloquence of blood—and to its tragic events our Saviour had alluded, as the most powerful advertizers of his sympathy for souls. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." "The bread that I give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some will even dare to die." "But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins." Here is the sum and substance of love—an instance of love, that has neither precedent nor parallel—a picture of love, which this Artist from heaven only could paint, and which he only could paint upon the canvass of the cross.

Wonder at its breadths, its lengths, its depths, its heights! It is love that passeth knowledge. Low enough, in its condescension, to reach the

extremities of human guilt and woe. Deep enough, in its foundations, to defy the rebellious energies of infernal principalities and powers. Broad enough, in its spreadings, to compass sinners of "every nation, kindred, tongue, and people under heaven." High enough, in its source and influence, to draw them upward to the joys of Paradise.

Wonder at its breadths, its lengths, its depths, its heights! It is love that will save; love that will not be frustrated; love that will have its objects; love that will subdue its enemies. There is no sinner too depraved, no pollution too deep, no case too aggravated. It heals all it touches; and having touched them, it embraces them; and embracing them, it holds them fast; gradually impresses them with more of its influence, and at last elevates them to the mansions it has prepared. Such love God only can comprehend, but the spiritual perception of it, on the part of the believer, fills him with joy and gratitude; and like the finny tribes, he lives and moves and exults in an element, he is incapable to exhaust.

Wonder at its breadths, its lengths, its depths, its heights! A love that could not be repulsed by the execrations of men, and which refused to leave them, though they despised its sympathy, wounded its comfort, and declared it was valueless. A love that retained its ardour and its constancy

amid the apathy of an ungrateful and unfeeling world. A love that outlived the swervings of professed friends, and the tumult of open enemies. A love that Gethsemane, with all its sorrows, could not chill. A love that Calvary, with all its horrors, could not check. A love that Death, with its penetrating sting, could not invade. A love that the Grave with its oblivious depths, could not bury. A love which defied diminution or extinction, by every combination of sorrow, ingratitude, opposition, and self-denial that could possibly be contrived or endured.

Yet while the rocks melted, men's hearts harder than the rocks melted not. They triumphed in his sadness, and laughed while he bled. Nor will it avail us, to repair to the cross daily, and to realize *in theory*, the sufferings of Christ most severely, and the love of Christ most fully, unless we seek that Divine influence which sanctifies contemplation and hallows the mind. All, without this, is transient excitement, or a sudden ebullition of mental feeling, which neither assists growth in grace, nor purifies the soul. It leaves us at the cross with a seared conscience, and though it may occasion a tear of emotion, it supplies no tear of penitence. It produces an outward, but not an inward change. Therefore while we gaze at the cross, let us seek the impress of the Holy Spirit,

that we may have some communion with, and enjoy some conformity to Him, upon whom we look, and who alone can save us.

And surely when we have contemplated the bodily and mental sufferings of Christ; when we have viewed him as enduring the curse in our stead; when we have received him in the arms of our faith, as the atoning sacrifice, upon which all our hope of salvation is founded; when we have discerned that the moving cause of this unparalleled interposition was LOVE, we can arrive at no other conclusion than that

HIS LOVE IS IMMUTABLE AND EVERLASTING.

Do we see Jesus, made a little lower than the angels for the salvation of men, and will he cease to love them? Do we see him enduring the cross, despising the shame, and will he cease to love? Do we see him giving his life a ransom, making his soul an offering for sin, and will he cease to love? Is not his *blood* a sufficient pledge of his *love?* Would he have gone to the depths of self-denial, if his love had not been unfathomable? Or would he have embarked in such an outlay, had he not determined to ensure his purchase?

The promise of the Father was, that he should see his seed; that he should see of the travail of

his soul and be satisfied. And having finished the work which was given him to do, he asked of his Father the covenanted reward. And what was this? Let us cite his own language. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." Such intercessions as these are enough to inspire the song of the elevated Poet:—

> "Yes; I to the end shall endure,
> As sure as the earnest is given,
> More happy, but not more secure,
> The glorified spirits in heaven."

And however the doctrine of final perseverance may be denied as "a modern heresy," by those who wrest the truth from its lovely connection, it is full of comfort and sweetness to the disciple of Christ, who does not enquire how much he may sin, and yet be saved; but who strives how much sin he can mortify before he is perfected. There never was a greater mistake than to suppose that a believer, enjoying the witness of the Spirit, will plead it as a latitude to walk after the flesh. Such an unchristian amalgamation of opposite causes and effects (illogical as well as impious) has long been

introduced with a view to disparage the precious doctrines of the gospel; but it is an unhallowed chemistry of which the word of God knows nothing.

The doctrines of the cross have always been perverted; but just as we should not scruple to make a good use of an instrument, because many have committed suicide with it, so we need not fear to make a scriptural reference to truth, because many have wrested the scriptures to their own destruction. Are we to lay aside the bible because others misrepresent it? Are we to deprive ourselves of its light, because others, in darkness, have perverted it? Or are we to be afraid to believe that we are the children of God lest our faith should not work by love?

We are told "the righteous shall hold on his way," that the sheep of Christ shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand. Yet such is the connection between faith and works, between divine influence and christian obedience, that the immutable and everlasting love of Christ, instead of making men careless how they walk, is the impelling principle, the glowing stimulant, by which they "abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good."

Man can no more find a reason in the love of Christ, why he should sin, than he can find a

reason in sin, why Christ should love him. Nor do we hesitate to affirm, that the man who sins because grace abounds, has never experimentally enjoyed the aboundings of grace in his own soul; but just knows enough of it, in theory, to mutilate its harmonies to his own overthrow. Nevertheless it is a most comfortable truth for the believer to be assured that the love of Christ will never cease.

It supports him in temptation, and resigns him in affliction: it sanctifies his prosperity and sweetens his adversity. And from such a source he strengthens his faith, and nourishes his hope, in the day when unbelief and despondency approach him. "To know the love of Christ" is his desire and delight, and the more it is shed abroad in his heart, the more he seeks its display. This is the Sea whose waters fail not; the sea of Christ's love. This is the banquet upon which the appetite palls not; the banquet of Christ's love. This is the cordial that reaches and soothes the depths of the believer's woe; the cordial of Christ's love. This is the anchor that is never lost in the storm; the anchor of Christ's love. This is the vessel in which the new-born soul enters full sail into glory; the vessel of Christ's love.

Wonder at its lengths, its depths, its breadths, its heights! And remember while its loftiest effort is the perfection of the whole redeemed church,

the eye of its sympathy can never sleep, nor can the arm of its protection be withered. And as "the mighty whole" is to gladden heaven with its sanctified congregation, the "less than the least" cannot be excluded.

What a melancholy system of religion that would be, which should keep us in suspense as to our salvation till the day of judgment; and which would pronounce it dangerous for the believer to read his "title clear," lest he should make an improper use of his faith. The apostle Paul not only desired the *existence* of faith, but the *assurance*, and even the *full assurance* of faith, in the experience of the church. He wished them to grow in every grace, and to increase in all knowledge; not fearing but that the Spirit of Christ, who dwelt in them, would direct them into a consistent employment of their spiritual attainments. He loved them as babes, but he longed for their maturity.

Shall the believer be kept ignorant of his privileges that he may be kept holy? Is grace in the heart such a principle that the dogma of the church of Rome "Ignorance is the mother of devotion" is at all applicable to it? Is it likely the more we know of Christ, and of the permanency of his love, the more we shall be in danger of despising and grieving him? What! Is religion

a theory, and not an influence? Is the Christian to tremble and to crouch like a *slave* beneath the lash, as though if he discerned his *sonship* he would not serve so willingly or so zealously? We have not so learned Christ.

On the contrary, we believe the more Christ reveals himself to us, the more we shall admire him; and the more elevated our views of his redeeming and perfecting love, the more devoted will be our hearts. When he makes known to us, by his Spirit, that he has loved us unto death, that he lives for us in heaven, that he superintends our concerns through the wilderness, and that he will come again to receive us unto himself—the immediate tendency of such openings of his love, is, to stir us up to watch and pray that we may not enter into temptation, and that our Lord may find us waiting his arrival. Nevertheless many of the people of God are frequently fearful that on account of their own weakness, and the power of their adversaries within and without, they shall be at length overcome, and finally fall away. Now though we would rejoice in their self-suspicion, and reckon their very fears as evidences of their safety, and stimulants to circumspection, yet we would, by no means, pronounce such a state of mind desirable. It proves that such persons are weak in faith, or that they look too much to themselves,

too much to their enemies, and too little to Christ.

We would have them live upon the unchangeableness of their Saviour's love, and upon the assurances he has given them in his word, that he will not cast off his people, that he will not leave or forsake them, but that he will perfect that which concerns them. We would have them to derive the honey of assurance from this honey-comb of promise, "All that the Father hath given me shall come to me;" and "him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." "And I will raise him up at the last day." We would not have them suspect the constancy of their Saviour when affliction or temptation assail them, as though he changed his feelings towards them, with every vicissitude in their circumstances. We would have them fasten upon the stability of the covenant "ordered in all things and sure," and pray down its blessedness in their own experience, when all things seem against them. This may be difficult, but the more difficult an undertaking, the more necessary perseverance and faith. And since it has been accomplished, by the help of God, by many of his dear children, in former times, there can be no reason why we, having the promise of the same aid, should not succeed.

O, why should our souls be overspread with gloom? Why should we be cast down and dis-

quieted? Why should we doubt of heaven with Jesus in the heart? Are we our own keepers, or our own safety? If this were the case, heaven would not only be improbable but impossible; but since our Redeemer is our strength and our shield, and his love is "the same yesterday, to day, and for ever," let us not dispute his power or his willingness to complete our salvation, by suspecting our security. The strongest must fall without his help, but the weakest must endure in the power of his grace.

"Saviour! if thou art mine indeed,
Then have I all my heart can crave;
A present help in time of need;
Still kind to hear, and strong to save.

Forgive my doubts, O gracious Lord!
And ease the sorrows of my breast;
Speak to my heart the healing word
That thou art mine—and I am blest."

How can we contemplate death with real christian submission and fortitude, unless we *know* whom we have believed, and are persuaded that he will keep that which we have committed to him? How shall we fear no evil in the pang of dissolution, unless we reckon that the light afflictions of this life are not worthy to be compared with that glory to which we aspire? How shall our friends behold us calm and composed, amid

the turbulent billows of Jordan, unless we are sustained by faith in the imperishable love of Christ? If we need him in life, how can we dispense with him in death? If without the manifestations of his love *now*, we are miserable, how shall we prevail without it *then*? But he is precious to them that believe, and faithful to all them that put their trust in him, and therefore we may dismiss our fears.

Contemplate a soul suspicious of its safety, and doubtful of a Saviour's love, when death approaches. The body invaded by disease, and weary of its functions; helpless, sleepless, restless, and full of suffering. Dear and anxious friends weeping around the wreck they cannot save, and aiming to anticipate its wants, and alleviate its woes. The eyes gradually closing and refusing to see any longer; the lips scarcely trembled with a remaining breath; the pulse undecided whether it shall beat again or not; and the whole frame pourtraying an immediate change. Eternity at hand! Heaven or Hell! Despair or Glory! What *then* must be the anguish of an undecided state! The anxietude and tremor of a soul not rooted and grounded in the love of Christ! What the remorse of uncertainty, whether we shall be ever blessed or ever cursed! What a torturing condition both for the dying and his attendants!

But on the other hand, contemplate all that has been depictured, and just suppose the soul instead of suspense and suspicion, to have the full assurance of faith, in the redeeming and perfecting love of Christ; and then how entirely reversed the scene and its effects! The dying pillow is wet with tears of gratitude, and the sick chamber is cheered with the song of salvation and triumph. Death draws near, but Christ is nearer; hell disturbs, but heaven composes; nature suffers, but grace sustains. The soul delights in its approaching flight, longs to be with Jesus, and without a care flies to the bosom of his love. Thus may we die, not suspecting, but fully assured of a Saviour's blessing.

May we seek more of thy fellowship, O thou dear Redeemer, that we may know thee more intimately, and believe in thee unreservedly. Let us not be always doubting whether thou hast loved us, for surely a glance at thy cross is sufficient to convince us. Neither let us suspect whether that love which moved thee to die and to suffer, in our stead, shall ever be removed from us, since thou hast promised to come again and receive us to thyself, that where thou art, we may be also—"Lord increase our faith."

CHAPTER IV.

HIS FILIAL SOLICITUDE.

And who is this that bleeds on the cross? Who is this fair one in distress? It is Jesus who "spake as never yet man spake;" "The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips."

If his utterances were so replete with wisdom, when a boy only twelve years of age, that even the doctors in the temple were astonished at his understanding and answers—if when he taught in the synagogue, his disclosures were so striking as to draw forth the enquiry "From whence hath this man these things?" surely there must have been something instructive in his language from the cross. If his words, in life, were precious, his words, in death, must have been peculiarly choice. How the keen ear of affectionate interest listens for the last syllables of a departing friend, and how fondly we cherish, in our recollections, the latest sayings of those whom we love! We remember their faint and lingering farewell, when time has

chased from our memory the distinct features of their countenance.

It cannot therefore be otherwise than profitable, if the Divine Spirit impress our minds, to linger by the cross, and to contemplate the words that fell from the sacred lips of this affectionate Saviour during the scene of his humilation.

THERE WAS THE VOICE OF FILIAL AFFECTION.— "WOMAN BEHOLD THY SON."

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, *Woman behold thy Son!* Then saith he to the disciple, *Behold thy Mother!* And from this hour, that disciple took her unto his own home."

The women who stood by the cross, and especially the mother of our Lord, demand some brief notice. The weaker and timorous sex remained, when the disciples forsook him and fled. Had *they* withdrawn, we might easily have accounted for their departure, by reason of their deep-toned sympathy, or their peculiar exposure in such a situation. Surrounded by an infuriated mob, they might have left the cross, nor would Christianity have

pronounced the slightest censure upon them had they done so. But their continuance, in the midst of the deepest anxiety, the most affecting cruelties, and undeserved reproaches, is the most noble monument of their faithfulness and love that could possibly be erected. Women, weeping by the cross! O! when did woman look more interesting, than when her tears of sorrow, mingled with her Saviour's blood, at the foot of the cross! "Beauty is vain, and favor is deceitful, but the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."

And here, perhaps, we may be permitted to remind our sisters in Christ of the peculiar influence which they possess, and which, in various ways, might be most successfully exerted, or brought to bear, upon the prosperity of our churches. We are pleased in being able to affirm that at the present period, the energies of believing women, put forth in the cause of God, far exceed those of former generations, and that the talent of female influence too long, either unemployed or only half-employed, in our religious institutions, is now more extensively appreciated. Nevertheless there is considerable room for improvement; there is more territory to cultivate, and there are many circles of usefulness and spiritual industry, with which our dear sisters

might be connected, without any sacrifice of that personal retirement and delicacy which it is their glory to maintain.

It should be remembered, in our day, there is a danger of *refinement* leaving its beautiful simplicity, and wearing the attire of *pride;* and that the Church may imitate the world, too much, in a false courtesy and diffidence, till the very duties of religion are deemed impolite to fulfil. The *holiness* of Christianity will never relinquish us from those distinctions which it is necessary to preserve; while on the other hand, the *zeal* of Christianity will never release half of its subjects from the employment of their talents, on account of their sex. Sex cannot be a scriptural apology for the concealment of ability, or for the neglect of that manifest outlay for Christ, which is demanded both of male and female.

Salvation is for woman as well as for man—the name of Elizabeth is in the Book of life as well as Zacharias—they are mutually interested in the blessings of redemption, and should therefore be mutually engaged in the exhibition of its influence. But as, in domestic life, they have their distinctive avocations and concerns, with the same end in view; so, in the Church of Christ, they have also their peculiar provinces or spheres of activity, but the *ultimatum* sought, by both, is

the salvation of souls, through the attendance of the Divine Blessing upon the means they pursue.

Perhaps an improper emphasis, or an injurious latitude of signification has been attached to the words of St. Paul "Let your women keep silence in the churches" "For it is a shame for women to speak in the church." Surely nothing could be further from his intention than that women were to be cyphers, or neutral in every good work or holy enterprize—but simply that they were not to usurp authority, to altercate or publicly dispute. Indeed elsewhere he appears to have sanctioned them in public supplications, and gives directions "every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head." Also in writing to the church at Philippi, he entreats the brethren to help those women which "labored with him in the gospel." Again; he speaks of Phebe as a servant of the church at Cenchrea, and remarks "She hath been a succourer of many and of myself also." Also of Priscilla and Aquila as his helpers in Christ Jesus—and in the same chapter he says, "Greet Mary who bestowed much labour on us."

It must consequently be concluded, after every scriptural consideration which is due to feminine sympathies, and after every proper distinction which a difference of sex demands, that there is

much, very much, to claim the efforts, and deserve the leisure time of our sisters in Christ; and that no *march of refinement*, or *fashion of this world*, can excuse them from treading in the steps of those primitive women, who though they adorned themselves with "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God, of great price," did not confine themselves to the privacy of a drawing room, or plead the delicacy of their sex, as a reason why they should not be fervent in spirit, or helpers of their brethren.

For ourselves, we are satisfied that the refinement of these days, and the false etiquette that rolls through our circles of acquaintance, like a snow-ball, chilling all it touches, would have pronounced these women, who wept by the cross, strangers to feminine diffidence, and rather degradations than ornaments to their sex. Therefore it is obvious, if we wish to derive information, how far a woman may embark in the cause of God, or to what extent she may devote her talents, and her sympathies, in the service of Christ, without an outrage upon female propriety, we must decide from the analogy of the Word of God, from an attentive comparison of scripture with scripture, and, by no means, appeal to a "world lying in wickedness," whose *outward refinement* is, much of it, the dictate of *inward pride*, and whose views

of delicacy are entirely mistaken, through the pollution of their own hearts.

How influential have been the prayers of Women! How effective their gentle remonstrances when harsher accents have failed! How melting their tears! How often have they made the bitter, sweet, and the sweet—sweeter still! How frequently has our heavenly Father prospered them in their labor of love, which though too insignificant for them to rely upon, has not been too insignificant for him to acknowledge. Their soft hand has wiped away many a tear of sorrow and vexation, their secret prayer has been the hidden spring of many a church's prosperity, and their mild and amiable example has melted down the fierceness and impetuosity of those who have *surrounded* them. And if in the most trying scenes, and under the most discouraging circumstances, their sex has found a sufficiency of strength, from its Divine helper, to persevere unto the end—how should the recollection of this fact stimulate them to increased activity. Surely with superior advantages, arising out of the cessation of bitter persecution, and the improved degree of general civility and courtesy—so far from falling short of the examples set forth, for their imitation, in the gospel, they should be summoned by the sense of their additional

responsibilities into a more expanded field of diligence and exertion.

O that our dear sisters may be encouraged by the past, not to be weary in well doing. May they remember their reward is in heaven, and that nothing can harm them if they follow that which is good. It has often pleased us to see men and women, labouring together in the golden fields of Autumn, to gather in the plenteous harvest; but how much more delightful to behold brethren and sisters, both working, while it is called "to day," with a view to collect an abundant harvest of immortal souls unto Christ, from the extensive and neglected field of the world. If we should only be instrumental in winning one soul, or if we should spend our whole term of life on earth, in spiritual labor, and only be useful in one instance, it will be far more honorable than to have possessed the finest inventive genius, or to have worn an earthly diadem. For rank, wealth, beauty, and all terrestial distinctions are eclipsed, when the humblest believer only brings his cup of cold water, in the name of Jesus, to minister to the welfare of another.

But refraining from these observations, let us return to the dear Redeemer's mother. She feels, but she feels as a Christian. It is deep remorse and therefore silent. We hear no out-

rageous exclamations, no bitter complaints against God, for not exerting his delivering hand. We perceive no endeavour to collect a party to rise up in his defence. We witness tears of sadness, but behold! the hand of submission wipes them all away. She endures as a Christian, bows to the design of an overwhelming providence, and prays for strength.

Who can conceive her anguish! Now the prediction of good old Simeon is accomplished, and the sword of suffering pierces through her own soul. Now is her Son suspended in torture, and she must needs behold the gradual advance of his agonies. For she had seen him toiling up the hill of Calvary, and fainting under the burden of his cross, beneath the mid-day sun. She was there when he was transfixed—there when his thirst was mocked with vinegar and gall—there when the reckless rabble spit upon him, and laughed at him—there when the mountain even staggered with the awful oppression of his people's sins. But she looked up to heaven, in the acme of her *woe*, and secretly prayed, "Thy will be done."

And how must her knowledge of his innocency, and her sense of his excellency, have enhanced her grief! A Son; but such a son as had never before been born of woman. A Son; but such a

son as no other mother had conceived. A Son; but such a son as needed not correction. A Son, who had never displeased her, but had endeared himself by every word and action. A Son, whom she might truly designate the glory of her house, and the consolation of her soul. A Son, in whom she might, at least, have expected protection to the tomb. A Son, whom Heaven had pronounced "beloved!"

To have beheld such a Son in such circumstances, who can pourtray her sorrows, or number the throes of her sympathizing heart? What must it have been to have witnessed the innocency of heaven blending with the agony of hell, in her expiring child? There was the innocency of heaven in his *nature*, and the agony of hell in his *condition*. The just suffering for the unjust, the purest treated as the vilest, and he who had done nothing amiss reckoned with the transgressors. If ever woman were in bitterness for her firstborn, it was then—if ever maternal sympathies could *innocently* outrage Christian submission, it would have been then—if ever a burden were disproportionate to the strength of its bearer, it was then.

The consideration of her own situation must also have aggravated her woe; and have furnished ample scope for timidity and suspicion. For she

was an exposed and penniless widow! and on this account must have been more susceptible of the privation of that filial faithfulness and support which she had enjoyed. In the prospective all was gloomy, uncertain, and saddening; and this was the more apparent to Mary, because of the past attention and care which Jesus had manifested. Every door of hope seemed shut, and many avenues for distrust and rebellion presented themselves. But mark the power and seasonableness of divine grace, in sustaining her so wonderfully, when the waters of affliction were so deep: and in enabling her to endure the keenest of troubles with the most entire resignation. She was most assisted, when most oppressed—grace sustained her when nature shuddered; and her guardian angel left her not *alone* in her anguish. Believer, there is the same assistance promised to you when the day of trial overtakes you, if you do not bring it upon yourself, by a personal deviation from the path of consistency.

Now the eye of Jesus looks upon her, and the voice of his filial affection is heard. His words are few, as might be expected from his condition of woe. Pointing to his disciple John, he says to her, "Woman behold thy Son!" I, no more thy Son, no more thy companion, no more thy guardian, but my disciple will take care of

thee. He will discharge the office of a son towards thee, he will "smooth thy passage to the tomb," therefore be of good cheer, and weep not. Then saith he to the disciple, "Son behold thy mother!" Accept the trust I commit to thee; protect her, provide for her—feel for her as a bereaved widow, and a wounded mother—let her share with thee on earth, and thou shall share with me in heaven—"And from that time, that disciple took her to his own home." Surely this is one endearing feature in the character of our Redeemer. When we mark the severity of his sufferings, by us but little understood, and see him nevertheless singling out his weeping mother from the interesting group of sympathizing mourners, and casting upon her a dying look of the most tender pity—when we behold this striking manifestation of his regard for the sweet and touching relations of nature, at a period when, through agony, we might have expected entire oblivion, we must feel altogether overpowered at the expression of such filial solicitude. True she was compassed about with the sins and weakness of mortality, and in one sense the offspring of his Eternal Power; but in another sense, he remembered she was his mother!

There is much to commend in the language of David, when wandering from place to place he

went to Mispah of Moab, and said unto the king, "let my father and my mother come forth and be with you, till I know what God will do for me." It evidenced an anxiety for the comfort of his parents, at a time when his circumstances were far from favorable, and such a principle must be praiseworthy wherever it is discerned. But more attractive still is the conduct of David's Lord, who even in the unparalleled agonies of crucifixion, could not breathe out his soul, until he had found a home for the destitute, and a protector for his afflicted Mother. He could not die stoical to her future interest; the last stroke of his pulse must needs beat with the warmest affection for his Parent.

How prone are we to be fretful in adversity, and how often does the Christian sufferer, speak hastily and ungratefully to those who are about his couch, to anticipate his wants, and comfort him in his trouble. How many affectionate wives have been wounded by the irritability of their suffering husbands, when they have done all in their power to alleviate; and how often has the tear of love been answered by the voice of complaint. How frequently are we insensible to the ties of nature, and to the claims of friends, when we are called personally to suffer. As though nothing would satisfy us short of a substitute, or as though we were

warranted to look for impossibilities in order to our relief.

How contrary the conduct of the Saviour! Not even his burden, as our sin-bearer, finds him forgetful of his mother. Not the cross, with all its cruelties, wipes away his felt obligations to her, from whose bosom he had drawn his infant sustenance. He would feel as a son, while he suffered as a Saviour. He would love his mother to the last.

And as this volume may probably fall into the hands of many of the rising generation, it may be advisable to urge upon their recollection, the powerful claims which parents have upon their children. Think of a Father pursuing the walks of industry, and heaving the sighs of anxietude day after day, while he feels "the link of nature draw him," and his children are never from his heart, with a view to provide for their future comfort and happiness. Think of a Mother whose home is her element, whose thoughts burn with intense and unremitting fervour for her offspring, and who welcomes self-denial, for their welfare, rather as a blessing than a restraint. Think of a Father's energies—think of a Mother's sympathies—and you will find it impossible to calculate the sense of your obligation to them.

The law of God binds it upon you to remember

it—the law of nature refuses to allow you to forget it—the law of conscience, following you as your shadow, tells you to honor your father and mother. How many have blighted their prospects, and embittered the major portion of their lives by disobedience to Parents! They have hurried them with sorrows, too grievous to be borne, prematurely to the grave, and have thus brought down upon themselves the vengeance of an offended God. They have chosen to be their own masters, and have thus made themselves slaves for ever. They have been wise in their own conceits, and have thus remained in perpetual ignorance. They have arrogated to themselves a self-sufficiency, they had no pretensions to sustain; and aiming to feed their pride, they have only advertized their folly to the world, and increased their dependance ten-fold.

Like the prodigal, they have gone away from home in a self-important spirit, insensible to the worth of the parental roof, and have thus taken pains to render themselves uncomfortable, and to degrade themselves in the estimation of virtuous society. And it is indeed well for them, if like the prodigal in another respect, they have ever come to themselves, and followed out his resolution, "I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against

heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants." But alas! it is to be feared, too many prodigals have never repented, too many rebellious children have never returned, too many have been led on, by Satan, into one excess after another, until they have lifted up their eyes in torment.

In a subordinate sense, our very existence during the stage of infancy, depends upon a mother's love—to her fostering care we owe a large amount of subsequent enjoyment, and our happiness in after life, is derived in great measure, from her unremitting faithfulness to the laws of consanguinity. Who will not confess, that he who has an affectionate Mother has *one* who can supply all the deficiencies of earthly relationship, save that of Wife? A sharer of his sorrows, and a partaker of his joys—the manifestation of whose sympathies is unbroken by outward circumstances and vicissitudes. O, if there be any interesting reciprocation more delightful than another, it is the mutual interchange of love between mother and child.

Children! be tenacious how you wound maternal sympathy, or mar the intentions of fatherly industry by your imprudence. Nothing is easier than to offend—nothing is more difficult than to regain

the path of morality when once forsaken. Love and obey your parents—they are to judge—you are to revere their decision—they are to rule affectionately—you are to submit willingly. Have you a Mother? Many have not. Remember a foolish son is the heaviness of his Mother. Bear in mind how Jesus loved his Mother! how he provided for her, and protected her! how he thought of her with the deepest solicitude, and mentioned her with the most tender regard in his dying moments! how he found for her an asylum, when himself most cruelly exposed! Son, Daughter, go and do thou likewise.

Nor should we entirely overlook the faithful execution of the Saviour's charge, on the part of his disciple. We are told "he took her to his own home." And in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we read, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the Mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." So that she was the companion of the twelve, and united with them in the means of grace. And, doubtlessly, while she was advantaged by the sympathy of John, he was abundantly recompensed by many communications which she might make concerning the Redeemer, and of which she, as his mother, might only be possessed. At least we know the blessing of

Jesus falls upon the obedient, and that they who manifest their regard to him, by a sympathy towards his people, shall in no wise, lose their reward. And therefore while we admire the promptitude and the fidelity with which this disciple acted, in carrying out the wishes of his Master, we may safely conclude that his steps of submission and benevolence were distinguished by that Divine fellowship, which is more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold; and by the light of that countenance which though once more marred than any man's is now radiant with an inconceivable and imperishable glory.

CHAPTER V.

HIS PARDONING MERCY.

How wise an appointment that *four* Evangelists should have been inspired to furnish us with the biography of Jesus Christ, and with the various circumstances that transpired at the time of his crucifixion. Not only is the record of one to be considered as a confirmation of another; but frequently what is only just hinted by St. Matthew, is fully detailed by St. Luke, and where one historian has only written, on any particular subject, enough to hold us in suspense, another has so amplified, as to scatter our doubts, and direct our conclusions.

Thus although Matthew, Mark, and John, have narrated the fact of two criminals being crucified with Christ, one on either side; they leave us altogether ignorant of any other event respecting them: and were it not for the statements of Luke, we could draw no other inference, but that *both*

of them perished in their sins. St. Luke, however, introduces, most appropriately, the pleasing instance of forgiving favor having been extended to one of them. And unquestionably next to the subject of the *atonement* itself, which the sorrows of the cross so mysteriously and fully announce to us, there is no occurrence, connected with the doleful tragedy, so interesting or so expressive, as the pardon of the sins of this dying malefactor.

If we can suppose Angels to have wept, as they looked down from the sanctuary of Heaven, upon the flowing wounds of One who had done nothing amiss, surely we can also imagine them to have wiped their tears of sympathy away, or to have seized their slumbering harps with holy rapture, when they beheld the conversion, the sanctity, the penitence, of an expiring sinner, just at the crisis when perdition was folding back its gloomy gates to receive him as the prey of Satan, and the prisoner of despair.

There was nothing in the agonies of a dying Saviour—nothing in the revilings of the mob, and the scoffs of a cruel soldiery—nothing in the rending of the rocks, and the opening of the graves—nothing in the awful darkness of the universe, to minister a momentary antidote against the deepest lamentations. The entire scene was

strangely calculated to harrow every sympathy, and wither the most sanguine hope. But when upon the very spot where the mystery of iniquity was unfolding its infernal roll, Salvation planted the throne of Holiness, in the heart of an alien—when eyes that had only looked revenge and mischief, wept tears of repentance—when a tongue that had only uttered evil imprecations, broke forth in all the fervour of earliest devotion—when a heart that had been callous both to divine and human legislation, softened into prayerful compunction—then, notwitstanding the gloom that overspread, and the impiety that prevailed, Heaven could not but feel a sudden burst of delight upon all its inhabitants. Earth trembled with amaze, and Hell was darkened with another cloud of disappointment. "Likewise I say unto you, there is joy, in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth."

In this limited sense, therefore, the sudden conversion of this condemned malefactor to the faith of Jesus Christ, is the most striking and animating incident connected with the crucifixion. And its brief contemplation will amply repay the few moments that may be expended upon it. May the Holy Spirit influence our hearts to feel, what our minds apprehend.

The voice of Pardoning Mercy. To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

"And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ save thyself and us. But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, 'Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds—but this man hath done nothing amiss.' And he said unto Jesus, 'Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom;' And Jesus said unto him, 'Verily I say unto thee, To day shall thou be with me in paradise."

Without the testimony of St. Matthew it would be impossible to tell at what period the pardoned thief became penitent; when his convictions of his own guiltiness were first implanted, or when his confidence in the Saviour was felt. It might be supposed that the hours he had spent in the condemned cell, had been passed in serious reflection, and that *there* the first tear of contrition had fallen to the ground. Or that the mortal injuries inflicted upon him, in fastening him to the cross, had conquered his apathy and destroyed his bravado. But from St. Matthew, neither of these suppositions can be entertained, because he, not only as St. Luke, speaks of *one* of the malefactors,

but of *both*, as joining with the savage multitude in their upbraidings, after they were nailed to the post of dissolution. His words are these "The thieves also which were crucified with him cast the same in his teeth." So that the only scriptural decision at which we can arrive is, that he was convicted and converted whilst hanging on the cross.

It is not to be wondered that so condescending and unexpected a display of Divine mercy to a dying culprit, should have staggered the weak faith of some good men. So that they have considered he was not converted while the companion of our blessed Lord on Calvary, but that he must have been, to a greater or less extent, a believer in Christ before he became his fellow sufferer. Now in broaching such an opinion as this, they must certainly have overlooked the assertion of St. Matthew, that "The thieves (plural) also which were crucified with him cast the same in his teeth." From which it is obvious, when first nailed to the tree, they were *both* irreligious and profane, whatever natural acquaintance they might have had with the character of the Saviour; and that, unquestionably whatever spiritual change passed upon the mind of the one, must have been produced subsequent to his suspension.

But why should we eclipse the sovereignty of divine grace in such an event? Why bring human improbabilities to subvert the facts of revelation? Why should we so cling to the apparatus of means as to suppose they can never be dispensed with? Many pass through a long and tedious process before they attain that *degree* of faith manifested by the dying malefactor; but is this any argument against the strongest faith being communicated in an hour, when any peculiar circumstance may demand it? Let us be careful how we explain the detail of Holy Scripture, that we may not reason or fritter away important facts, because they unfold so much of divine mercy and condescension, as overflows the boundaries of our circumscribed minds.

What a period of extremes! The day of death, but the day of spiritual birth! The day of sorrow, but the day of salvation! The hour of pain, but the hour of prayer! The cross tormenting, but the crown inviting! Earth watching for his farewell groan, ashamed of his deeds, Heaven waiting his arrival, as a sinner saved by grace!

We cannot entertain a doubt as to the guiltiness of this Sufferer—that he was worthy of death is evident from his words "And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds." He had been a plunderer, an invader of human

happiness, intrenching upon the morals of society and fearing neither God nor man. Doubtless his hard heart had been made harder by the repetition of his ungodly deeds, and from the usual demeanour of such abandoned characters, we can only conclude he had outraged the voice of conscience, by the clamour of his infuriate vices, till she ceased to speak.

Imagine him before the judgment bar of man, contemptuously smiling, either denying the fact of his delinquency, or justifying the course he had pursued. The awful sentence of Death is pronounced upon him, but a disgusting indifference is still stamped upon his countenance, and he walks back to his dungeon with the tread of disdain. The walls of his comfortless cell only echo with his whistle of inconsideracy, and the morning of his execution finds him the same unmoved and unaffected being. They nail him to the cross, and the severity of his corporal sufferings, instead of melting his heart, or subduing the flame of his indignation, only urges more impious exclamations. He curses Heaven and Earth with his dying breath!

Soon however he turns his eyes towards Jesus, who was placed between him and his companion in sedition—he marks his patience, his composure, and submission. This glance at his countenance,

perhaps, brings to his recollection the miracles he had wrought, the offices of human kindness he had fulfilled, and perchance some of the words of truth and soberness he had spoken to the multitudes. Jesus returns the look, and the eye of the guilty malefactor comes in contact with the eye of the innocent Redeemer. The effect is indescribable! The icy heart is dissolved, in the suddenness of a moment, and the most notorious villain becomes a prayerful Christian! Who can sufficiently extol the condescension, as well as the sovereignty of Divine grace? Condescension that would bow to the vilest, and save the most impious. Sovereignty that no human worth can deserve, and which no human demerit can obscure. Even a thief, too base to live, and too depraved for earth, shall die in holy triumph, and be made meet for heaven. Too defiled for his fellow man, but purified for his maker God! Well may we wonder at the mercy of the cross.

The conviction of his own sinfulness seized his inmost soul immediately upon his glance at the Saviour. No more a stranger to himself, he tells his companion, "We suffer justly;" acknowledging, without any reserve, his own worthlessness and depravity, and openly admitting the equity of the horrible and lingering punishment he was enduring. This indeed is one invariable symptom

of a genuine repentance—a repentance "that needeth not to be repented of"—it leaves not the penitent a vestige of personal excellency on which to rely—it allows him not to question the exceeding sinfulness of sin—while it involves an inward persuasion of the justice of God, in the infliction of its punitive consequences.

"I have sinned," and "I deserve to suffer," are the heartfelt acknowledgements of every sinner saved by grace; nor is there one of our race, now before the throne of glory bearing the image of Jesus, who was not once polluted with evil like ourselves; and from whom similar confessions have not escaped. The happiest inmate deserved to be an outcast, and the very lips that tremble with celestial praises, might have been burdened with eternal sighs. Thus, like the thief, looking unto Jesus, we discover our own unworthiness—the contrast overpowers us—and our former resources of happiness and safety are found to be fallacious. It is in our approach to the light, that we no longer remain insensible to the darkness within us.

He who aims to screen himself by comparing himself with his fellow criminals—he who supposes he has one or two praiseworthy qualities to commend him to divine forbearance—he who strives to diminish the magnitude of his crimes, or dis-

putes the equity of the sentence which has impartially uttered its solemnities over every soul that has sinned—furnishes no evidence whatever of the operation of divine grace upon his heart. But rather *exaggerating*, on the one hand, the degree of his own obedience, and *lessening*, on the other hand, the extent of divine requisitions, he binds the artificial chaplet of self-righteousness upon his brow, and wears it as an undeceiving token that he has never looked upon the Redeemer with an humble faith. He who is of the true circumcision has no confidence in the flesh.

Connected with this feeling of self-distrust, is an admiration of the character of the Saviour, and a spiritual discovery of his excellency, through the teaching of the same Spirit, whose office it is, not merely to throw a little light upon isolated spots, but to illuminate the whole hemisphere of revelation. Thus the acknowledgment of this malefactor "We suffer justly" was instantly followed by his protestation of the Redeemer's innocency. "This man hath done nothing amiss." From which it would seem he had some theoretical knowledge of Jesus, or had been an observer of some of his works and ways before he beheld him on the cross. And thus he would not withhold his testimony, that although he had been

scourged as a slave, and was then bleeding and openly disgraced as a criminal—although he "was numbered with the transgressors," nevertheless he had done nothing amiss.

There can be no doubt that the Holy Spirit who can train a criminal for heaven, when it pleases him, in the twinkling of an eye; and who can produce a spiritual classic, in the swiftness of a single lesson, was pleased to reveal to the mind of this penitent much of the person and mission of the Saviour, as he gazed upon him. And these blessed discoveries, conjoined with his former knowledge of our Lord's manner of life and procedure, drew forth the affirmation of his innocency and rectitude.

That he had a deeper insight into the character and circumstances of the Redeemer than could possibly have been derived from his own observations, or from any natural penetration, is obvious from the supplication he subsequently presented. "Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Had he followed the Saviour, day after day, through the whole term of his humiliation; had he witnessed all his miracles, and listened to all his discourses; this external acquaintance with him, however extended, would have been insufficient to have inspired the

confidence, or to have supplied the faith, discoverable in this brief requisition.

He knew that he was fastened like himself to a cross—he saw the blood streaming from his veins—he witnessed the varied indignities with which he was assailed—and momentarily expected he would die. Nevertheless he adresses him as his LORD! Lord remember me! I am dying; Thou art dying—I am bleeding; Thou art bleeding—I am suffering; Thou art suffering—but Lord !—Lord remember me! Thou art the king of kings, though crowned with thorns. Thou art the Lord of all power and might though crucified through weakness. Thou art the owner of Heaven though a martyr on earth. Thy name is "God over all for ever blessed," though thy human nature is by man accursed.

What a surprising triumph of faith was this! this was dying by faith indeed. He sought not help from the living that surrounded him, but from the dying suspended by his side. He appealed not to the free but to the fettered. Even when the faith of the disciples was staggered, and suspicion forbid its exercise, the faith of a penitent, just converted to the Saviour, was most vigorous. He beheld him in all his ignominy, but his faith pictured him in all his approaching glory.

Calvary was the spot on which he was born again, and therefore Calvary was the spot where he would live by faith. The look of Jesus had penetrated his soul ; and as his look had been so effectual, he doubted not the efficacy of his blood. Such a change had been wrought upon his feelings and affections, by the tender and compassionate glance of the Saviour, that he could not otherwise than trust him to the end. He had done so much, that he felt assured he was able to do more. He had remembered him on the cross, and he wished never to be forgotten.

Lord remember me! Let me have a place in thy gracious recollections, let me know that thou wilt always think of me, and I shall die in peace; I have no other request to make, no other desire to breathe in these my latest moments, but that thou wilt remember me. I have been a base transgressor, I have sinned against God and man. Earth will remember my vileness, my impiety, my hardihood; but do thou remember me, as a poor, lost, helpless, unworthy sinner, who must be for ever undone, but for thy gracious recollection of me. Soon my last pulse will beat, my lingering torments will end, and human law demand no further satisfaction; but Saviour! Lord! with my last fleeting breath, I pray " Remember

me." The agonies of hell I deserve. The extacies of Heaven I desire. Of thee forgotten, all is ill. By thee forgiven, all is well.

" Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."—Though I behold thee in my nature though I recognize thee as the man of sorrows, yet art thou my Lord and my God! Though now fastened to the cross, I know thou wilt reign for ever and ever in glory; thou hast a kingdom, an everlasting kingdom, and thy name is above every name. Let thy tears fall for *me*, let thy blood flow for *me*, let thy fulness satisfy *me*, let thy sympathy remember *me*. I ask no diminution of my protracted agonies, no mitigation of my lengthened sufferings—all my desires are for a blessed immortality, and if thou will remember me, it is enough.

O, the preciousness and the power of that heaven-born faith that can sustain the believer in the deepest emergency—hushing the tumult of his fears, and tranquillizing his fluttering breast, when every earthly solace fails. Who can find a substitute for faith in Jesus? In life we may be deluded by fair promises from other sources, but in death we shall want realities to depend upon—for then nothing less will minister a momentary charm.

But we may enquire, did this distracted penitent obtain any answer to his petition? Or was

he left to enter the mazes of eternity, in an agony of suspense, as to whether he should obtain mercy or not? Not so—Such a prayer of faith could not fail to bring a reply from the lips of the gracious Redeemer—it must needs avail much—Such a fervent desire, expressed with so much humility and dependence, could not die in disappointment. And as the exigency of the petitioner, and the circumstances of the case, rendered an immediate answer indispensable, no sooner had he presented his entreaty, scarce had his lips ceased to move with the fervour of his request, when the voice of pardoning love and mercy, from the dying Saviour, set his agitated mind at rest, and assured him of his eternal peace and safety.

"And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." He does not upbraid him with his past iniquities, nor does he answer his plea for salvation with mementos of his delinquency; but beholding him a penitent and self-renounced sinner, he at once assures him of his everlasting love and regard. As though he should say, "I am dying for thee, and thou shalt reign with me for ever; I have put *thy sins* away that I may not put *thee* away. Still look unto me, and thou shalt be saved."

To day, this world will bid thee Adieu, and *to day*, a better world shall be thy inheritance—*To*

day, thou art penitent, and *to day*, thou shalt be perfect. *To day*, the cross torments thee, and *to day*, the crown of life shall adorn thee. *To day* thou wilt quit thy suffering frame, and thy immortal spirit shall break through the confines of materialism, but *to day* thou shalt inhabit thy building of God, thy house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For to day thou shalt be with me in paradise.

We pass by the controversy as to what is intended by "paradise." The word does not occur at all in our English version of the Old Testament, but is found occasionally in the Greek, or Septuagint translation of the original Hebrew. It literally signifies "a garden set round with trees" and was primarily used to denote the abode of our first parents in Eden. It is therefore introduced, in the New Testament, *figuratively*, as signifying a place of extreme happiness and delight, and the intention of the Redeemer in the use of the word, was no doubt to assure the dying thief, that when he should be absent from the body, he should be present with him in a state of infinite blessedness.

The intermediate state of trial, fabled by the Romanist, would not have satisfied him; and as to the intermediate state of sleep and unconsciousness which others have fancied, it never entered

his imagination—He knew he had a deathless, sleepless soul; and nothing but a deathless, sleepless state of bliss would content him. Thus the Saviour returned him the most suitable answer, "To day thou shalt be with me in paradise."

What cheering words were these! Sufficiently animating to secure comfort upon a cross, and to lighten the dark valley of the shadow of death. Not a syllable of discontent escapes his lips; he has no hard speeches to publish against his enemies or his executioners; he looks at his Lord, and imbibes the spirit of patience and submission. And perchance this thought crossed his anxious mind; Surely, if Jesus who has done nothing amiss can suffer so meekly and christianly—if he, when reviled, reviles not again—if he, so holy, harmless and undefiled opens not his mouth, but to bless and to pray—how much more should I be speechless and gentle, who am a *guilty* sufferer, and deserve all the miseries that oppress me. His legs are now broken by the Roman soldiers, and his body worn out with lingering and excruciating torments, refuses longer to feel their pungency. He ceases to breathe, and his blood-bought spirit under the convoy of its guardian angel, blends with the heavenly host, to live for ever in the fellowship of Jesus, and to swell the chorus of his praise.

We cannot conclude this chapter without some

remarks upon the important subject of repentance, and we most sincerely wish that every theologian would, irrespective of human system, take the simple statements of Holy Scripture on the point. Nothing can be clearer in the New Testament than that repentance is the duty, the unquestionable duty, of every sinner—"God commandeth all men, every where to *repent*." "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, *Repent* ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God and saying, The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand, *repent* ye and believe the Gospel." Such expressions as these could not be intended for those who had already repented, or were under any peculiar convictions, but were addressed to a multitude, dead in trespasses and sins.

Those who denied the Holy One, and the Just, who killed the Prince of life, and were among the most degenerate of mankind, Peter addressed thus: "*Repent ye* therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." Again, he exhorted Simon Magus, then a hypocrite, in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity, both to *repent* and *pray* for the

forgiveness of his sins. And when Jesus had sent forth the twelve, two by two, and had given them power over unclean spirits, it is recorded of them, that "they went out, and preached that men should *repent*." From these and many other passages, we conclude that a *real*, *heartfelt*, and *spiritual* repentance is the duty of every sinner.

It is puerile to say: "Sinners are under the law, and the law says nothing about repentance, and therefore a sinner has nothing to do with repentance, in a way of duty—he has only to do with the law." For in answer to this let it be remembered, the law was not made for sinners originally, neither does it suppose the *existence* of sin—consequently not supposing the *existence* of sin, it cannot contain, at least among its precepts, the duty of *repentance* on account of sin. The law given to man in innocency could not include repentance—repentance cannot be the duty of an upright perfect creature—but the moment the law is broken, repentance is bound upon the law breaker as a duty, though all his penitence could never heal the breach, or be accepted either as an atonement or as a substitute for obedience.

The whole duty of Adam, as unfallen, was summed up in perfect obedience—but when he fell, not only perfect obedience, but also heartfelt

repentance was required of him. Therefore though repentance is not a duty revealed in the law, nor a duty consequent upon the law, yet it is a duty consequent upon the *breach* of the law, which the Legislator equitably demands of every transgressor.

As long as a child obeys the Parent, repentance is neither named nor required; but the moment the child disobeys, repentance becomes both the due of the Parent, and the duty of the child. So also as long as our first Parents perfectly obeyed the Divine Legislator, repentance could neither be enforced by heaven, nor obligatory upon earth—but the hour they ceased to submit, it was their duty to begin to repent of their insubordination, and thus their vast progeny, following them in the steps of disobedience, are equally bound to repent likewise.

Let those who relinquish a sinner from the duty of repentance, because it is the gift of God, reflect upon the pernicious tendency of their system. Would they tell a child that had disobeyed his father, that he need not repent, and that future obedience was all that could be required? That because repentance was not his duty *before* he transgressed, therefore it cannot be his duty *after* he has transgressed! Would not this harden the child in his impenitence, and go very far to invade the future happiness of the domestic circle?

And equally injurious, if not still more baneful are the effects of relinquishing sinners from the duty of repentance towards God. It hardens them in their unrighteousness, it inculcates fatalism; it frames an excuse for them to neglect the use of means. Have they sinned, and yet *ought not to be sorry*? Have they disobeyed, and yet they are *not bound to repent*? Have they offended God, so good, so holy, so merciful; and yet to mourn over their offence is not their duty, because repentance was not Adam's duty before he fell! Let us ever shun such principles as these, for if some good men can espouse them without injuring themselves, the multitude of sinners who may receive them will only be made more obdurate and rebellious.

Nor must the seriousness of this subject be invaded by distinctions between *natural* and *spiritual* repentance—because all repentance that is not heartfelt and practical, genuine and spiritual, is, before God, no repentance at all. The repentance to which we are summoned is an inward sorrow for all sin, and an earnest endeavour to forsake sin. It is not a certain degree of regret, mingled with a certain degree of reform, or a season of trouble and lamentation on account of any particular inconsistency, but it is an abiding mournfulness over all that is evil. From such a

repentance as this, even Satan himself cannot plead an exoneration; nor can it be disproved from scripture, or by fair argument, that all the fallen angels in perdition ought to be sorry for their sins. The tear of penitence from the eye of Beelzebub is the due of heaven, and the duty of every inhabitant of those infernal regions is to confess his own unrighteousness, and to vindicate the holiness of God.

There is also an opposite extreme into which others fall on the subject of repentance, equally pernicious and unscriptural. They represent it as a condition which the sinner is to bring that he may be accepted of Jesus Christ. Thus they bring it into the sphere of natural strivings, and they speak of repentance, and of putting off repentance, as though it were as easy to repent, as to eat and drink. In opposition to this, we maintain that Repentance, though the duty of sinners, is the gift of God, and that no sinner of himself ever did or will repent. If he wait to go to Christ until he repent, he will never go at all. Repentance is represented by too many, as our qualification to repair to Christ, whereas truly we must repair to Christ that we may repent. Any preliminary conditions imposed upon man, before he can have access to Christ, are calculated to mar the freeness of the gospel,

and to cloud the sovereign grace of God. As to human pre-requisites they are no where to be found in the word of God; and as, if our dear Redeemer had waited to become incarnated, until he beheld certain features to induce him, in our rebellious world, he would never have descended at all—so if the sinner is to keep away from Jesus, until he has something from himself, as a passport, he will never approach him one solitary step.

The simplicity of the Gospel of Christ has been too much obscured by the veil of human system, and men have been exhorted to believe and repent that they might be accepted of the Saviour, instead of being directed to look at once unto him, who is the dispenser of these spiritual blessings, and not the claimant of their prior existence. If indeed faith and repentance are conditions of salvation (as they may be in one sense, because no man can be saved without them,) yet, let it be remembered, the *conditions*, as well as the *salvation* are both bestowed by the Saviour himself. So that we are not first to look to ourselves for the *conditions*, and then to Jesus for the *salvation*, but we are to look unto Jesus for the one as well as the other. "Look unto me and be ye saved!"

The Prophet Zechariah, in allusion to the obdurate Jews, has said "They shall look at him

whom they have pierced and mourn." Not they shall first mourn, and then look, but they shall first look, and then mourn. We are willing to admit men may tremble at the threatenings of the law, when it reveals its awful rigour, and presents itself as a schoolmaster; but never, never, will they spiritually repent until they look at Jesus. We would not therefore in enforcing the universal duty of repentance, for a moment inculcate the idea, or support the extreme against which we disclaim, that men may repent of themselves, or that repentance is an easy work, to be performed through natural strivings; or that sinners must bring their tears of penitence to Christ for acceptance. On the contrary, we believe, while the *entrance* of sin has not by any means relinquished sinners from their obligations unto God, but has rather increased them—at the same time the *influence* of sin has altogether incapacitated them to fulfil the least. Or in other words, sin has increased man's debt to his Maker, but has reduced him to such entire poverty that he cannot pay one farthing.

It has been frequently remarked "God requires no natural impossibilities;" and therefore as a natural man cannot repent, (it being a natural impossibility) "God cannot require it." This however is unscriptural; and arises from the non-

perception of the difference between man as *upright*, and man as *fallen*. From man, as *upright*, God required no natural impossibilities; he was able to do all that God desired. But from man, as fallen, he *does* require natural impossibilities; for he requires him to fulfil the law, and to love him with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength; which indeed no sinner is able to do. So also he requires him to repent of his sins, although his nature is so depraved that he loves them, and his understanding so darkened that he discerns not their exceeding sinfulness. This may seem harsh, but the severity of the terms arises not from any *injustice* on the part of the Divine Legislator, but from the *inability* of the creature, which, be it remembered, he has brought upon himself.

It is true the state of a man must ever precede the *duties* of that state; but it by no means follows that the state of a man will enable him to *fulfil* those duties. The state of man as a perfect creature, involved the duty of obedience, and this duty he was able to fulfil—but the state of man, as a sinner, involves the duties both of *obedience* and *repentance*, neither of which he is able to perform. And thus it is his duty to do as a sinner, what his sin disables him to do; and yet the justice of God is unim-

peached, because he only maintains his immutable authority and invariable holiness.

Thus on the one hand, insisting upon man's *obligation to repent*, and on the other hand maintaining his *total inability to repent* of himself—and further enforcing the fact that *except he repents, he must inevitably perish*—we endeavour to impress him with that awful and powerless dilemma in which moral evil has placed him. We tell him that HE OUGHT TO REPENT—we tell him that HE CANNOT REPENT OF HIMSELF—we tell him that UNLESS HE REPENTS HE MUST PERISH. We aim to rivet upon his attention this overwhelming emergency into which he is cast—for unless he is made uneasy, he will never bestir himself; and unless he feels his need, he will never repair to a helper. While we therefore demonstrate the real and desperate condition of the impenitent transgressor, if the Holy Spirit should apply the fact with power, and enforce the truth with his promised energy upon the conscience, he will awake from his slumber of apathy, and enquire, "What must I do to be saved?" O, "what must I do to be saved?" He will say—I am told repentance is my duty! I am told, I cannot repent of myself! I am told, except I repent, I must perish! miserable condition! O, then what must I

do? Whither must I flee? To whom shall I go? How deplorable, how critical, how awful is my position!

We answer, the same Gospel which calls you to repent, tells you whence you are to obtain both the will and the way. And while we call upon you to repent, and to forsake sin, knowing that unless you do, you must perish, so far from driving you to self, or sending you to your creature resources, we plainly declare to you that of yourselves it is impossible. Do you then ask, How the helpless, guilty, impenitent sinner is *to do what he cannot do of himself*, we simply reply "Look unto Jesus," for "Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour for *to give repentance* to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Go then to Jesus—away with all preliminaries and conditions—away with the fetters which human system would impose—tell him you want power and grace to repent that you may be pardoned, and you shall find the faithfulness and the sweetness of his promise. "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

Surely none would infer because Jesus was pleased to save the dying malefactor at the eleventh hour, that it would be either safe or consistent to presume upon his mercy, and to spend the whole term of life in dissipation and vanity in the expecta-

tion of a similar manifestation. For as one has appropriately written upon this subject, "Christ must die again, and thou must be crucified with him, before such a day as that shall come again; for although on the days of coronations, and great espousals, the streets be hung with tapestry, and the prisoners be let loose, and the conduits run with wine, yet if a man be cast into prison at any other time, he will be left to be executed, and if a man go to the conduits at any other time, he will find only water."

And equally inconsistent is the argument, that because in many instances, the grace of God has most unexpectedly taken possession of the heart, and has proved its freeness and its energy where it was never solicited—that therefore it is vain and extravagant to exhort sinners to repent. As though these aboundings of divine grace were at all inimical to holy admonition and exhortation. Or because God has frequently saved where no means have been employed, that on this account we should not enforce the regard of means upon the attention of sinners.

We maintain that the salvation of the soul is that momentous concern which should absorb every other interest. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his

own soul?" Now if Christ be revealed as the only Redeemer, we must ply all the apparatus of means, (in humble reliance upon the Holy Spirit to make them effectual) to drive men to Him. And in this we shall never succeed, until we, by the help of God, make them uneasy in themselves, and enforce upon their reflection this startling fact that—*If they do not, what they cannot do of themselves, they must eternally perish.* This truth enforced upon the conscience by the Spirit of God, who has promised to clothe his own truth with power, is admirably calculated to excite alarm—to abase self—and to lead to Jesus, to whom no sinner ever sincerely appealed without success.

CHAPTER VI.

HIS SINLESS INFIRMITIES.

The harps of angels are still unstrung in heaven, and the dissonant revilings of men are still heard on earth. The Redeemer continues to suffer, and his Mother to weep. His enemies "stand staring and looking upon him," but the miracle of his love and of his patience leaves them unaffected. They behold him still suspended upon the cross, but no feeling of gratitude, no sorrow for sin, no sentiment of pity or compassion, either hushes the tumult of their persecution, or calls forth their forbearance.

Again his lips are seen to move, as though he would speak, and soon is heard:

THE VOICE OF INFIRMITY—"I THIRST."

After this Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled saith, "*I thirst.*"

What less could be expected? The previous night had been spent in anxious watching, and in earnest prayer; and then it was that he had sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground. Add to this, his examinations before cruel and intimidated judges, and his subsequent buffetings and stripes. And no sooner did the next day appear than he was dragged from place to place, wearied and tormented with the reproach and smitings of his enemies, and at length destined to bear his own cross till he fainted beneath its weight. Now for six lingering hours, he had been hanging on the tree, and who can wonder that the severity of his protracted pangs, in the entire absence of anything approximating to a palliative, should have pressed from his lips the acknowledgement, "I THIRST?"

There is no doubt, at least with us, but that our Saviour, by this exclamation, referred to his corporal sufferings, or to that anguish of body which was caused by the brutality of his murderers, and the dreadful wounds which they inflicted on his frame. Thirst is one of the greatest miseries our animal nature can experience, but it is impossible for us to realize it fully, having always a plentiful supply of water, and being strangers to the fatigue of an eastern traveller. This metaphor,

like many others, loses much of its force and value in our island, through its peculiar adaptation to a locality exceedingly hot and dry.

In Holy Scripture it is generally introduced as a superlative term; its *abundance* signifying the extreme of happiness and prosperity; and its *absence* involving the extreme of misery and calamity. Thus the blessedness of the man that trusteth in the Lord is described, in his being as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river. And the *misery* of the man that maketh flesh his arm is depictured, by his inhabiting the parched places in the wilderness, and by his dwelling in a salt land. Again the *adversity* of the soul is expressed by the words "fainting for thirst," and her prosperity by the promise, "thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not." And the language of the Lord God to those who forsook him, and forgot his holy mountain, conveys to us the same idea, "Behold my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty."

Indeed the extacies of Heaven, and the agonies of Hell, are set forth by the same metaphor. Of the one state, it is written, "They shall hunger no more, *neither thirst any more;* neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall

feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." And of the other state, it is said, that "the rich man cried, being in torments," "Father, Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame."

We do not therefore consider, as some commentators, that when our Redeemer cried from the cross, "*I thirst*," he intended to signify the intensity of his desire for the salvation of his people, or his zeal for the consummation of his sufferings; but rather that his human nature then endured the extreme of misery and want. His strength was dried up like a potsherd, or the radical moisture of his body was exiccated through the nature of his anguish, and the loss of his blood. And a burning fever was brought upon him by the various sorrows and afflictions that had overtaken him. Thus his tongue cleaved to his jaws, and his words, "I THIRST," were *literally* true.

We have no objection to a spiritual accommodation of the passage, as long as imagination is modest, and does not subvert fact; but we are by no means partial to those flights of fancy, by which the primary signification of Holy Scripture is too frequently overlooked. The design of

the commentator should be to make portions that are difficult and obscure, easy to be understood; and for this purpose a depth of penetration is bestowed upon some more than others, that they may first remove the veil of obscurity, and that thus all may gaze upon the open face of truth. Sometimes, however, explanatory notes have been less intelligible than the subject they intended to simplify; and many like the poor woman, who read Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, have been better able to understand the book itself, than the remarks appended with a view to interpret it.

But we may further enquire, how did the surrounders respond to this cry of infirmity? "Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar, and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth." Upon this the learned Dr. Gill has the following remarks:

"This vinegar was part of the allowance of the Roman soldiers who crucified Christ. Sometimes it was mixed with water, which mixed liquor they called Posca, and was what even their generals sometimes used; as Scipio, Metellus, Trajan, Adrian, and others. Vinegar was also used by the Jews, for drink, as appears from Ruth, 2 Chapter 14 verse. "And dip thy morsel in the vinegar," which Boaz' reapers had with them in the field, because of heat as the

commentators say, that being good to cool and to extinguish thirst; for which reason the soldiers here offer it to Christ; though the Chaldee paraphrase of the above place makes it to be a kind of sauce or pap boiled in vinegar; and such an Embamma, made of vinegar, the Romans had, in which they dipped their food. But this here seems to be pure vinegar, and different from that which the other Evangelists speak of, which was mingled with gall, or was sour wine with myrrh. Vinegar is good to revive the spirits, and hyssop which is after-mentioned is a herb of a sweet smell; and if the reed which the other Evangelists make mention of was sweet calamus, as some have thought, they were all of them things of a refreshing nature, &c. &c."

It is observable that St. John is the only Evangelist who relates the fact of Jesus having said upon the cross, "I THIRST;" although both Matthew and Mark speak of the vinegar being given to him, and the one affirms that it was mingled with gall, and the other with myrrh. Now without an attentive comparison of the three Evangelists, there is a danger of supposing some contradiction in their statements. Matthew speaks of vinegar with gall. Mark speaks of vinegar with myrrh. John speaks of vinegar without either of them.

We conclude therefore that vinegar was *twice* offered to our Redeemer; once by itself and once with an admixture of something very bitter, which is intimated both by the gall in St. Matthew, and the myrrh in St. Mark. And we arrive at this view of the subject from the fact of St. Mark, mentioning the circumstance *twice* in the same chapter, not surely as a vain repetition, but in our opinion, to intimate that it was *twice* offered to the Saviour.

In the 15 Chapter, and 23 verse, he writes "And they gave him to drink wine, mingled with myrrh, but he received it not." This quite coincides with the statement of Matthew, 27 Chapter 34 verse. "They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall, and when he had tasted thereof he would not drink." The difference between "*gall*" and "*myrrh*" being merged in the word "bitter." Then again St. Mark says, in the same chapter, and 36 verse (only 13 verses distant from the former account) "And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down." This quite coincides with the statement of John, "Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar and they filled a sponge with vinegar and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth."

Moreover it may be remarked, the Evangelist Matthew also mentions the circumstance *twice* in the same Chapter. And both from his record, and that of St. Mark, there is every reason to infer that the *first* time the vinegar was handed, it was proffered from custom, as an intoxicating cup at the commencement of his ill usage, and before he was fastened to the cross. THIS JESUS REFUSED. And the *second* time it was handed, it was given not in a cup, but in a sponge, mounted on a reed, he being then uplifted, and transfixed, and consequently unable to take it in any other way. THIS JESUS RECEIVED.

Thus it appears to us the difficulty is removed, and the apparent contradiction fairly reconciled, by the conclusion that the vinegar was *twice* offered. And our reasons may be summed up thus—firstly; because the Evangelist Mark twice names it in the same Chapter, agreeing in his first account with Matthew, and in his second with John—secondly; because we read, it was first offered with bitter, and afterwards without—thirdly; because we read that with bitter Jesus refused it, "he would not drink" and without bitter it is said "he received it"—fourthly; because the one appears to have been with a view to intoxicate, and which was customary to offer malefactors before execution; and the other with a view to

revive or prolong life, that when they heard him cry "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani" they, supposing him to be calling for Elias, might have the interval to see whether Elias would really come to deliver him.

Thus the Scripture was fulfilled (Psalm 69, verse 21) "They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink," and the severity of his sufferings was intimated in his brief but bitter exclamation. Not that we discover any trait of human kindness, or expression of sympathy, in the second proffer of this vinegar; for while we admit that the vinegar *without gall* was administered with a view to revive or sustain life, just as the final struggle was perceived, yet the motive was that of vain curiosity, as is evident from the words that accompanied it, "let us see whether Elias will come to take him down;" and therefore the occurrence was rather discreditable to them than otherwise. Indeed we cannot imagine any sentiment of benevolence or sympathy to have dictated any single action of these barbarous murderers, who panted for his latest breath, and resorted to every device to aggravate his woes. Nor would they have heeded his cry for a moment, but with the gratification of their selfishness in view.

"I THIRST." Whose words are these? The

words of Him, who had laid the foundations of the deep, and measured the waters in the hollow of his hand! Amazing condescension! Mystery inscrutable! To him belonged the fulness of the creation, but now he is poor! His hands formed the sea and the dry land, but now he thirsts! "For it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

He pursued the round of all human conditions of sorrow and suffering, that he might imbibe the spirit peculiar to each; he curtailed not his experience to one sphere of existence, nor confined himself to a solitary infirmity, but he took *all* our infirmities and bare *all* our sicknesses, that he might have feelings for all saints, gladness for all grief, sympathy for all sorrows, and that he might succour his members in every emergency. His trials were but the tuning of the instrument, from which should sound an unequalled melody of sympathy, for the consolation and support of believing men and women. And hereby he became the organ of spiritual feeling to the whole church.

He was tried by the most painful extremes, but the emotions of his soul were ever under the willing control of holiness, and thus though emphatically the Sufferer, his hand never brandished

the sword of the Avenger, nor did his heart beat with the resentment of the Destroyer. He learned obedience by the things which he suffered, and the school of adversity only discovered the pre-eminency of his character, just as the ardency of the fire distinguishes the precious metal from the earthy ore. "For we have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

"I THIRST." Reader, canst thou say so? Dost thou thirst? Hear the voice of Jesus to thee; "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." He will not disregard your application, nor mock your approach with the cup that is bitter; but he will conduct you to his banquet, and while his banner over you will be love, he will fill you with the substance of his promise "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed and my blessing upon thine offspring, and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses." It is written concerning him, "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth." Alluding to the preaching of the word under his administration, and to its being rendered powerful in its application, to the hearts of men, by the Divine

Spirit, whose influence is sufficient to satisfy and sustain the whole church of God. Thus to every thirsty and humble sinner, Jesus is as streams in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. He is always able and willing to supply, for his fulness is ever the same.

And yet we fear the charge must be brought against many which was adduced against the Jews on account of their causeless revolt. "My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Not living sufficiently upon Christ, and turning too much within themselves; or looking to Christ merely to make up their deficiencies, instead of fully embracing him as he is revealed in the Gospel—the entire Saviour! Expecting from their tears of repentance, and sighs of contrition, and prayers of confession, *that* consolation and satisfaction which never can be found, but in Jesus himself, and through the shedding abroad of his love in the heart. Thus aiming to live upon *religious* self, while renouncing *carnal* self, and to gather support from a course of spiritual obedience which is only to be derived from the treasury of the King whom they obey.

May all such experience the power of the invi-

tation, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price." And may they feel the force of the expostulation, "Wherefore do ye labor for that which satisfieth not?" "For the Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say Come; and let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "He that believeth on me shall never thirst."

CHAPTER VII.

HIS SOUL DESERTION.

While the multitude looked on with triumphant malice, unconcerned at the agonies they witnessed, a supernatural obscurity overspread the heavens, the sun refused to throw its light upon this deed of darkness, and the natural world was involved in an awful gloom at mid-day. This marvellous event, although omitted by the historian Josephus (an omission not to be wondered at, since he rejected Christianity) has been noticed by several contemporaneous heathen writers whose names are mentioned by Eusebius, as a most remarkable phenomenon, and by no means to be accounted for in the ordinary course of nature. No—by the special intervention of God, that day was to be unlike all other days.

It could not have arisen from the impatience of Evening, anxious to conceal the dreadful tragedy, because it took place at mid-day; neither could

it have been a natural eclipse of the sun, because that occurs at the time of the new moon, whereas the Jewish passover was always celebrated at the full moon; and indeed the fact of its continuance, for the space of three hours altogether contravenes such a conclusion. Unquestionably therefore it was an uncommon testimony to the innocency and majesty of the bleeding Redeemer.

According to our Lord's own words, it was the hour of the enemy, and of the powers of darkness; it was the hour when the prince of darkness, to a certain extent, prevailed over his great antagonist; the time for the bruising of his heel. And as an event, so replete with wonder and with sadness, had no rival from the creation of the world, and could have no equal to the last day of its continuance—the day of universal conflagration; it is, by no means, singular that such an occurrence should have been accompanied by some external circumstances to declare its matchless immensity.

The voice of soul anguish.—"My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land, until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice,

saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani; that is to say My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" These words, as reported to us by the Evangelists, are the Syriac version of the Hebrew taken from the twenty-second Psalm; in which it had been predicted, that our blessed Saviour should, in his agony, utter this piercing cry. And as in the words "I THIRST," the very depths of his *bodily* sufferings are involved, so in this exclamation, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACTHANI," the extreme of his *mental* torment is presented to our thought.

In a former chapter, when contemplating him as an innocent Sufferer, we laid much emphasis upon his affliction of mind, recognizing it as the most severe of all his conflicts, and concluding as it has been expressed by an old writer, that "his agony of soul was the *soul* of his agony." Our remarks therefore will now be in a different channel, but we may nevertheless derive spiritual benefit by some varied allusions to sufferings so advantageous.

Perhaps it is impossible to furnish a more lucid commentary upon the agonizing interrogatory, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" than the few words contained in the prophecy of Isaiah, "Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Irrespective of this covenant substitution, the question has no satisfactory reply,

and the divine purpose and design are wrested from the cross! Leaving it neither more nor less than an example of patience, on the part of the sufferer, and an instance of enormous depravation on the part of the murderers. But this would be cold theology indeed, and the blood of Calvary only viewed as the blood of innocence and resignation, and not as the blood of atonement, would, instead of purging the conscience and comforting the penitent, only proclaim more loudly the demoralized condition of mankind, and leave a fallen world the worse for its effusion. If no satisfaction for sin were made upon the cross, then to all intents and purposes, that very event having egregiously augmented our iniquities, has left an additional gloom upon our race, and its recollection must be rather fearful than reviving.

God having made him to be sin for us, and having laid the onus of our transgressions upon him, it was necessary that he should expiate them. And thus he not only suffered from the violence and barbarity of men and devils, not only was he traduced and reviled below, but he was also scourged with the rod of Divine indignation. "The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed."

He was forsaken of God! The Father could no more look with complacency upon sin, as imputed

to Christ, than he could approve it as inherent in us. Sin is equally sinful and heinous, in the account of Deity, whether it be found in men, in devils, or upon Christ by transfer. And therefore it could not be overlooked, or be otherwise than punished, when Jesus took it upon himself. He only redeemed his people from the curse of the law, by being made a curse in their stead; and the same vengeance, which in the absence of his interposition, must have fallen upon us, and have borne us downward to eternal woe, fell most fully and most violently upon him without any diminution. Justice cannot forgive in the substitute, what it cannot forgive in the offending party; and therefore it could not pass by sin, transferred to the Head, which it could not palliate as beheld in the members. The mere imputation of sin from one to another, neither atones for it, nor amends its nature; and the same feeling of abhorrence towards it prevails in the Divine mind, be it found where it may. Thus the wrath of God spent itself on him, the justice of God drew its honors from his bleeding veins, and the face of God not merely ceasing to smile, but wearing the awful frown of displeasure occasioned the exclamation, "Why hast thou forsaken me?". The whole weight of concentrated punishment that was due to the elect, was laid upon him; from

not one jot or tittle of it was he excused; all that the infinite justice of God required, he cheerfully though in another sense *sorrowfully* paid. The overflowing cup concerning which he had prayed "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me," contained not a single drop of anguish that he did not drink. Nor during such a baptism of blood, such an immersion in the fiery flames of divine displeasure, did the voice of murmur breathe a sentence, or the suspicion of divine faithfulness lodge for a moment within his breast. He admired the long-suffering and compassion of his heavenly Father, who instead of consuming his sons and daughters universally, would allow the melancholy sentence to be executed in the person of the elder Brother, who could make an end of it in death, and at the same time become the resurrection and the life of the whole apostate family.

Nor are we to understand by the term "forsaken" simply the withdrawment of the divine presence, but also the manifestation of divine indignation. The smile was not only suspended, but the frown was beheld. There was not only the removal of former pleasure, but the positive infliction of indescribable pain. "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him, he hath put him to grief." We have not only to contemplate a Father, who had ever communed with his Son, and who had always

delighted in him, and between whom there had been an unbroken fellowship—suddenly departing from his Son, or concealing himself from his approach—though this indeed would inflict a most excruciating pang. But we have also to consider that same Father now executing the full sentence of a broken law, now manifesting his severe aversation towards all ungodliness, and now visiting on that same Son, the punishment due to the whole family! The thought is all-absorbing. The meek and lowly Jesus being consumed by the blow of the uplifted hand of his Father! Deity smiting him as our substitute, who had personally done nothing amiss! Well might he cry, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And heaven, and earth, and hell, learn from his cross things never learned before.

"Forsaken of God!" Nevertheless the sins of his people, imputed to him, could not possibly contaminate him. Had his nature become polluted by taking the burden, then his sacrifice would never have removed it. He was "holy, harmless, and undefiled," in himself, though he was "made sin for us;" and as pure when suspended on the cross, as before he arrived at its sorrows. Just as a brother standing forth to endure the penalty of the law, in the place of a younger brother, who had committed murder, would not himself become a murderer, or

impeach, but rather establish the loveliness of his disposition—so the Lord Jesus Christ, in presenting himself as the Substitute of his members, in announcing his willingness to bear their infirmities, and to suffer the chastisement due to them, did not thereby cast a reflection upon his own innocency, or infect his own nature, but forcibly demonstrated the perfection of his character. He became one with them in nature, but not one with them in *character*. He was treated as guilty, but his name was Innocence. He was crucified as a malefactor, but he had only done good. And thus when he had exhausted the penalty by patient endurance, and carried away the sin into a land not inhabited; not having defiled himself in the tremendous undertaking, he needed none to purify or intercede. His suffering spirit emancipated from its lacerated frame-work of flesh, passed into the bosom of his Father, no more to be forsaken or oppressed.

"Forsaken of God!" That God might not forsake us, and that we might forsake sin. What delightful results spring from the temporary eclipse under which Jesus passed, and while we sorrow in the contemplation of his accumulated woes, how pleasing to dissipate the grief by the remembrance of their glorious effects. He was forsaken that we might be embraced, and towards him the terrific frown of the offended Legislator was directed,

that the light of the Divine countenance might gild our pathway to heaven. He endured all the curse that we might enjoy every blessing. He deemed no humiliation too great that our exaltation might be secure.

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." And now the voice of forgiveness breathes its soft music to the soul, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from them. I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." And now the faltering hope of the penitent is revived, and leaving the enquiries of despondency, "Shall thy wrath burn like fire?" "Wilt thou hide thyself for ever?" he exclaims, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints; but let them not turn again to folly."

The Father faithful to his *holiness*, visited the iniquities of "the many" upon their voluntary substitute, and punished them in him. Therefore now faithful to his *covenant*, he deals out pardon and dispenses mercy. As an enemy to sin, he forsook the *sin-bearer;* but as a friend to sinners, he will not forsake *them*. There were only two alterna-

tives, either the *temporary* abandonment of the Head, or the *eternal* abandonment of the members. The former was selected that the latter might be avoided; and thus the excruciating cry, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" while it intimates the fulness of our Redeemer's cup of anguish, as truly involves the overflow of our cup of blessedness. "My cup runneth over," is the song of the church, and the penetrating enquiry of Jesus, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" has been mercifully answered by this promise to his seed, "O, Israel thou shalt never be forgotten of me."

"Forsaken of God!" Surely the sufferings of Christ at that moment can only be very superficially understood by the best and holiest of men, yet there are human analogies which enable the believer to imagine what he cannot comprehend. The sense of God's love was withdrawn; there was no sensible communion afforded him, and such an inconceivable desertion was more than he could bear in silence. The cross must bear witness to the awfulness of an absent and offended God. Yes, at the moment when he most needed consolation; when the tide of life was fast ebbing out beneath his oppressive sorrows; when he was pursuing man's restoration to eternal happiness; doing the greatest work that ever was, or will be effected; and magnifying God beyond the voice of creation,

or the choruses of angels—even then he was deserted! No voice from heaven was heard—no glory was beheld—no dove descended—but the cloud continued.

Such was the intensity of his love, that he would persevere in suffering what was needful for our redemption. The enormity of sin must be marked, that all who have eyes to see, and ears to hear, may see and hear it at the cross. And thus, though he was performing an act of marvellous obedience, perhaps the worthiest of the approbation of God, and one on which his Father ever looks with satisfaction, yet as our representative, as our atoning surety, he was then forsaken!

But from this desertion something deeply practical may be deduced. We may learn that God may desert for a time, those whom he loves with an everlasting love. Not from choice, however, but from necessity. Not to display his divine sovereignty, but his parental discretion. It is true, "Whom he loveth he chasteneth," yet we must remember when love chastens there is a necessity, and all such chastisement implies our need of it. The obedient disciple has the promise of the light of the divine countenance, and as long as he walks worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called, and prayerfully commits his way to the Lord, he shall not be frowned upon. For "like as a Father

pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." And having revealed to us his tenderness, through this interesting and touching metaphor, we may fairly infer from it, that as an earthly parent never corrects an obedient and discreet child, even though he may kindly tell him of many slight improprieties, so our heavenly Father will never cast away from his presence, those who do his commandments, with a single eye to his glory, and in humble reliance upon the grace of his Holy Spirit. These shall renew their strength, they shall sing in the wilderness; and feeling that though salvation is by grace, they can only enjoy the Divine communion, as they forsake all unrighteousness, they will possess an additional stimulus, to be careful to maintain good works.

But if we grieve the Holy Spirit "whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption;" if we are too much conformed to this world; if we know the will of God, and do it not; if we make provision for the flesh to fulfil its lusts, or become lukewarm in that cause which demands our unreserved affection, then assuredly, though we may be children, we shall be for a time deserted. God will discover sin in us, as he beheld it on Christ by imputation, and as he forsook him, he will forsake us. "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments, if they break my statutes and keep

not my commandments, then will I visit their transgression with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes."

Therefore let us as Christians, be watchful. If we are walking in darkness, and are deprived of his gracious presence, it is not his love, but our folly. Something omitted or something committed. Reader, Which is it? He loves not to hide his face from his children, but he will not smile on their faults. Examine yourself, and may God give you light to perceive what is amiss that you may correct it, and once more find the joy of his salvation restored to you. How can we hope for the fellowship of God unless we continually watch the minute details, the secret motives, and principles of daily life.

Watch, believer, watch! And the same light which shone forth upon Christ when he had accomplished his undertaking, and had *put away sin*, by the sacrifice of himself, will certainly again irradiate your soul, when you have cast Achan out of the camp, and have cut off those "right hands," and plucked out those "right eyes," which you have sinfully spared. Then the Sun of righteousness will burst forth, and dissipate the thickest gloom, and the light will revisit those eyes that once sparkled with spiritual joy, but which have lately been dimmed by the tears of

depression. The oil of consolation will be poured into your desolate heart, and you shall prove the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

God is a sovereign, and his sovereignty is a delightful theme; one at which the natural man often cavils, but on which the believer loves to dwell. "He doth as it pleaseth him in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." Yet while we fully concede to him all those prerogatives which are indisputably his right, not questioning for a moment but that all spiritual gifts are his free bestowment; we must be careful that we do not introduce his sovereignty as a reason for our slow progress in the divine life, or as a plea for any desertion of soul which we may experience; while the deficiency of Christian advancement and enjoyment is only fairly attributable to ourselves. We should grow up more into Christ, if we took more spiritual exercise; we should be happier in frame, if we were holier in feeling; we should more resemble Jesus, if we looked at him more intently and communed with him more frequently. We have not, because we ask not.

Perhaps there is no believer who does not more or less plunder himself of spiritual advantages on his pilgrimage, and who does not rob himself of the divine presence, by leaning too much to the

world, and cleaving too little to the cross. How many more "times of refreshing" I might have had, how much more communion with God, how much more of "heaven below," had I sought it more fervently, or had I been less conformed to the world! Surely God will not dissappoint the expectation of the righteous, but we may blast our own prospects, and blight our own hopes, by a course that is displeasing to him. Do not our hearts condemn us? Do they not point out our deficiency? Do they not tell us, they have been frigid when they should have been zealous; and anxious when they should have been indifferent? Then if our hearts condemn us, how can we have confidence before God?

If it be not with us, as in days that are past, it is because we have left our first love; because we have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and have hewn out broken cisterns which can hold no water. It is because though we "did run well," something has hindered our continuance in well-doing! Perhaps some *secret* sin we have not yet discovered, or what is more aggravated, some *presumptuous* sin, we well know, but love too much to mortify. Perhaps some lust unsubdued, some envy or jealousy unsuppressed; some unkindly feeling towards a brother, some omission of duty, neglect of prayer, or practical

contempt of God's word! Let us not therefore impute our spiritual famine, or loss of the Divine presence to his sovereignty, but let us search out our own sinfulness. "YOUR INIQUITIES have separated between you and your God, and YOUR SINS have hid his face from you that he will not hear."

Let it not however be supposed from these observations, we imagine that no affliction or calamity will overtake the children of God in the path of duty. It is to be expected that they will be equally liable to a series of trials, as living in a sinful world, and as having a body of sin and death. But we must distinguish between an *affliction* and a *chastisement*. The most devoted minister of Christ may be afflicted in himself, in his family, in his circumstances, or in his church. But this is distinct from *chastisement*, which we may safely conclude will only follow, where inconsistency of some kind has paved the way for it. Suppose a Minister to be suspended by personal indisposition from his accustomed labors, will it prove that God is chastising him? Perhaps he is giving him more light and peace and joy than he had in the midst of his activities, and making his couch of languishing, a harvest of spiritual blessings and privileges. At the same time, he may be chastising the people, over whom

that minister has presided, for their want of love and interest towards their Teacher, and may by his temporary affliction improve their zeal on his behalf. Consequently we must distinguish a common calamity, or a season of bodily infirmity, from a time of divine correction and displeasure.

Believer! expect affliction, for it will visit you even in the path of duty; but you will never receive chastisement, except you forsake that path. Affliction arises from the *existence* of sin, but *chastisement* only comes to the Christian from the *indulgence* of sin. The believer's afflictions are occasioned by his sinful nature, but his chastisements from its want of subjugation. Cleave to the Lord with full purpose of heart, and then though you may be often afflicted, you will never be chastised. But God will be with you in the furnace, and the flood, and instead of crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" you will imitate the elevated strain of Habakkuk, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Fear not to endure affliction, but fear to bring

down chastisement! Fear not the presence of an enemy, but fear the absence of God! Be not afraid because the world, the flesh, and the devil are against you; but be "horribly afraid" to move God against you, by departing from his ways. God will make the obedient disciple as happy in adversity as in prosperity. Prosperity has often had its gnawing worm, while adversity has found a guardian angel.

Thus Daniel was safe in the den of lions, while the king, surrounded with all that could minister to his repose, was troubled with dreams. Thus Paul and Silas sang praises in the prison, while many a falling tear has stained the robe of royalty. Thus the pious youths, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were uninjured in the midst of the flames—they lost nothing but their fetters—not a hair of their heads was so much as singed, while those who had executed the impious sentence which the haughty monarch, full of fury, had pronounced, were destroyed with the fierceness of the element. O, for more of that precious faith which feeds on promises amid the famine of painful and mysterious providences. O, for that unshaken confidence in God, for that firm reliance upon his word, which enables its possessor to soar above the temporary cloud, and to breathe in the atmosphere of serenity and submission, when circumstances agitate and perplex.

It should be with us a secondary matter, whether the sea is calm or turbulent, whether the tide is in our favor, or against us; whether we are in health, or in sickness, in wealth, or in poverty. Our first enquiry should be, Is the Lord on my side? Is God with me? Is He become my salvation? For without him prosperity is a blank, and with him adversity is easy to bear. Fear no frame like that which will warrant the cry, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and value no frame like that which will inspire the words, "Yea, though I walk through the dark valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for *Thou art with me.*" Sweet words! "Thou art with me!" This is the happiness of heaven! Awful words! "Thou hast forsaken me!" This is the despair of hell.

But should you, Reader, be a stranger to the consolations of the Divine presence, suffer me with all gentleness and christian fervour, to intreat your serious consideration. Perhaps you have hitherto treated the subject with contempt, and have imagined that *enthusiasts* only speak of "seeing that which is invisible" or of having enjoyed communion with another world. If you value not his presence now, if you desire not his "still small voice" in this world, is it likely you will escape the voice of his thunder, "Depart

from me" in the world to come? What must it be, to be shut out from God for ever! To be cut off from the source of all joy, the author of all excellence, and the only refuge from eternal condemnation!

You trample upon immortality—you abuse the faculties God has given you—you laugh at his threatenings—you mock his entreaties that you should "consider your ways," and flee to the cross—you are cruel to yourself, and pursue the destruction of your own soul. Yet you say, "God shall not see," and forget that for these things, God will surely bring you to judgment!

Think of the awful contrast between the song of heaven and the groan of hell, when the destinies of all men shall be irrevocably sealed. "*Thou art with me!*" the never ceasing chorus of sinners saved by grace, and the grateful strain which the harps of angels shall perpetuate. But "*Thou hast forsaken me!*" the universal howling of the damned, and the melancholy outcry of infernal principalities and powers, whose despair will be eternal. Weigh the discrepancy of these sentences in the balance of consideration; and pause before you determine to leave the most important matter to the day of judgment. In perdition "*thou hast forsaken me*" will be a fact, but the enquiry "Why? Why?" will not be made, inasmuch as the accusing

conscience will too well know the reason. "Depart from me," "Depart from me," this is the thunder now grumbling at a distance, but its approach is rapid, and soon it will spend its terror, and roll its anguish upon all who are strangers to the Divine fellowship, and enemies to God by wicked works.

Do thou, Eternal Spirit, impress our minds more deeply with the desirableness of that Divine presence, which is indispensable to present happiness and future glory. May we be warned by the pungent grief of Jesus, when under soul-desertion on the cross, from every step that might bring us into a similar condition of misery. Thy presence, O God, is fulness of joy, but thine absence, who can bear? Cast us not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from us. Thy smile is more to us than all the world beside, and by thy manifested favor the heaviest burden is made light.

"I cannot bear thine absence Lord
My life expires if thou depart;
Be thou my heart, still near my God,
And thou my God, be near my heart.

I was not born for earth or sin,
Nor can I live on things so vile,
Yet I will stay my Father's time
And hope and wait for heaven awhile.

Then, dearest Lord, in thine embrace,
Let me resign my fleeting breath;
And with a smile upon my face
Pass the important hour of death."

What Jesus suffered in soul when he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" must be for ever endured by those who shall be finally cast away from his presence. This is the curse—"everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power." And this sentence of perpetual anguish will never be reversed! Yet the prodigal returns not to his heavenly Father's house, nor seeks the smile of forgiveness! Reader, "hear counsel and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in the latter end." And while many say, "Who will shew us any good?" may you be led to exclaim, "Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me,"—leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

CHAPTER VIII.

HIS FERVENT INTERCESSION.

The High Priest under the law, was to perform the solemn services of the great day of atonement, in the garments of the ordinary priests, and not in the rich attire peculiar to his own office. Surely in this there was an especial reference to the humiliation of the Redeemer, who concealed the power and the splendour of his Divine nature, and made himself of no reputation. The High Priest having then entered within the veil, and having sprinkled the mercy seat with blood, and being alone, commenced the great work of intercession. And thus it is observable, our Lord Jesus began his entreaties, on behalf of his people, in the lowly garments of his humiliation, before he put them off, or exchanged them for his robes of glory. Even the cross, the altar of atonement, was the mercy seat of intercession; and the pleading voice of the Great High Priest, when bathed in his own sacrificial blood, was heard and regarded.

Of all the utterances which fell from the lips of the Saviour, during his crucifixion, none could be more unexpected than that we are about to consider. His other exclamations might, at least some of them, have been anticipated; but who could have supposed that in the midst of his torments, he would commend his very murderers to the mercy of heaven, and follow up their reiterated slanders, with such fervent prayers for their salvation, as could not fail to be effectual? Who would have thought that unbridled savageness, on their part, would have been answered with such celestial solicitude on his part, or that the fever of their sinful and infuriated passion, would have been mercifully rebuked with the sentiments of devotional anxietude for their forgiveness?

It was not enough that when reviled, he should not revile again—it was not enough that when he suffered, he threatened not—but upon the cross, he would practically exemplify the conduct he had enforced, in his sermon on the mount, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you." Amidst his own reproaches and distresses, he would abide by his motto, "Resist not evil;" and turning the other cheek to him who had already smitten the

one, he personally exhibited the merciful character of the new dispensation he sought to establish.

To him, Truth was only valuable as it was *practical;* nor did he teach any doctrine that had not holiness for its tendency. The doctrines of the cross were precious in his esteem, nor would he part with them, because many cavilled when they heard them. But never did they appear more glorious, or wear a lovelier aspect, than when they found accents of tenderness to answer the tongue of scandal, and breathed the spirit of forgiveness towards their most violent opponents. It was then, when a Saviour's compassion, in its generous outflowings, exceeded the cruelty of his merciless tormentors—when the sighs of his pity followed the scoffs of their contempt—when the brazen face of stoicism, full stare at the sufferer, only beheld in return, the visage of meekness and forbearance, it was *then*, that the mission of the Saviour appeared most divine, and the doctrine of the cross most benevolent.

The voice of intercession. "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

"Then said Jesus, Father forgive them; for they know not what they do." Pungent as was his grief in the garden of Gethsemane, his love

towards his thoughtless disciples was there displayed, in arousing them from sleep, and in exhorting them to watch and pray that they might not be overcome by temptation. But upon the cross, his sympathies extended far beyond the range of his friends, and his fervent prayers included his foes. His lovely sensibilities were not stoicised by their barbarisms, nor was his philantropy diminished by their cruelty. He could pray for them while they persecuted him, and while his destruction was their aim, their salvation was his desire.

O, unexampled affection, that dictated the words, "FORGIVE THEM!" and that would not be chilled by their malicious procedure. What a heavenly frame of mind was that which such a scene of sorrow and ingratitude could not disturb! What patience was that which earth and hell could not provoke! What perseverance was that, which no form of opposition could subdue, and which no amount of self-denial could drive from its generous resolutions!

"FATHER FORGIVE THEM." I feel for them, though they feel not for me. I feel the wounds they have inflicted upon my body, but still more the wounds they have thereby inflicted upon their own souls. I hear the scoffs and hissings of the crowd. I see them as they glory in their shame. "*Father*

forgive them ;" let my tears, my groans, my blood prevail on their behalf, and lay not this sin to their charge. "*Father, forgive them ;*" "*Father, forgive them !*"

And could ruthless murderers hear these words, and yet persist? Could bold blasphemers listen to this cry of sympathy, and not adore? Could the excited multitude feel no excitement of a nobler kind, when prayers like these were breathed for their salvation? Alas! the benumbing influence of sin, the stubborn heart of fallen man.

Obdurate to his sorrows and his solicitude, they still looked on, still their revengeful clamour vexed his ears, and the voice of his fervent intercession was insufficient to hush their tumultuous fury. *His* was the voice of devotion, but *their's* was the voice of sedition. *His* was the prayer of faith, but *their's* was the sneer of unbelief. Behold they revile him with a simultaneous shout; "This is he who said, he could build our temple in three days, and where is he now?" And before the horrid din had ceased, another band addressed him, saying, "He saved others let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God." He heard their taunts, he felt their sneers; the accumulation of their guilt augmented his anguish, but his prayer on their behalf could not be restrained.

"FATHER FORGIVE THEE" was his only answer

to their execrations, while he faithfully pursued the overwhelming errand upon which he came—"to seek and to save that which was lost." And then did he learn most fully, the necessity of the aggravated nature of his sufferings, by beholding the aggravated nature of their transgressions. *Fallen* nature, in its pride, would have come down from the cross, at the call of its revilers, and have left them to perish in their sins; but *spotless* nature, in its meekness and long suffering, continued as a sacrifice to put their sins away.

Condescension thus without a parallel, and patience thus inconceivable, have, in many instances, been disputed by men of corrupt minds, as well as by men of great reasoning powers, who have been led to deny the fact of our Lord's all-sufficiency, because of his unwillingness to send down vengeance upon his persecutors. But his forbearance is, to us, the pledge of his power; as unquestionably it requires more power to forbear, than to smite, when an injury is inflicted. Our God is a God of salvation, and his various methods of manifestation are ever adapted to the cause he undertakes. Thus when *power only* is needed, *power only* is displayed; but when *misery* tells her tale in heaven, then *pity* joins with *power* to remove her woes. Thus the cross is the witness of both—there was pity to suffer; there was power to save—there was pity to

shed tears; there was power to wipe them away—there was pity patiently to endure; there was power ultimately to prevail. The weaker nature furnished the sacrifice; the superior nature supplied its efficacy. And as the High Priest, under the law, interceded for Israel, not without relation to the shedding of blood; so this great High Priest over the house of God, in pouring the blood of atonement, upon the altar of his cross, interceded for the people, saying "*Father forgive them!*"

Ah! THEN! "THEN said Jesus"—when in his mortal frame were concentrated all the torments flesh and blood could bear—when on his spotless soul were laid the iniquities of all his members, past present, and to come—when the acts of his mercy had been contemned, and his wholesome instructions rejected—when his patience had received every insult, and his unvarying tenderness had met with the most savage outrages—THEN; Then said Jesus; "*Father forgive them!*"

And the words he subjoins are also worthy of observation—"*For they know not what they do.*" From which it is obvious he referred not to those who, with enlightened minds, betrayed and condemned and crucified him, and who were well acquainted with his case and character—but to those who had been led on by others, and who being in bad company, had been infected by them,

and tempted to join with them in their infamy and revenge. Doubtless, there were many who had gathered around the cross comparatively ignorant of the Saviour, or of the circumstances that had combined to place him in such a situation. Yet mingling with the multitude, and destitute of personal religion, it is not to be wondered that they soon became "partakers of other men's sins," and helpers in their cruelty.

Our Redeemer, therefore, seems not to have intended those who had wilfully resisted the Holy Ghost, and whom Stephen addressed, when he said, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted! And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have now been the betrayers and murderers." But rather he referred to those whose sin was not wilful, and who in different ways, had been collected and enlisted in an iniquitous tragedy, of the details of which they were either *un*informed or *mis*informed.

Sins of wilfulness are in many parts of Sacred Scripture distinguished from sins of ignorance. In Hebrews, 10 Chapter, 26 verse, it is written, "For if we sin *wilfully* after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more

sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" And in full agreement with this, are the words of our Lord, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." In the face of these passages, we conclude there is no sin so heinous in the sight of God, as a wilful ascription of the works of the Holy Spirit to the influence of the devil, or a wilful and continued resistance of an internal conviction. This appears to be the unpardonable sin, as may be discovered from Matthew 12 Chapter, 22—38 verses. And for the pardon of this we cannot suppose the Redeemer to have prayed.

No other sin argues such a total depravation of mind but that it may be repented of and forgiven.

He who speaks against the Son of God, and is not convinced of the revelation concerning him, may yet be converted by the power of the Holy Ghost. But he who maliciously reviles the most evident operations of the Spirit of God, contrary to the reason of his own mind, and the dictates of his own conscience, has no further means left by which he may be convinced, and therefore can never be forgiven. We will not undertake to say to what extent a man may go in the resistance of conscientious impressions, or how long he may stifle his convictions and aim to repress salutary awakenings, and yet afterwards obtain mercy. But we will affirm that such an one is, to all appearances further from the kingdom of heaven, than any other character; and that his daring profanity outvies and outvenoms the pollutions of the most degraded sensualist.

They however, had an interest in the dying intercession of the Saviour who were *ignorantly* sinful, and which Peter confirms in his address to the men of Israel; "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses. And now, brethren, I wot that THROUGH IGNORANCE ye did it, as did also your rulers"—That these had not committed the unpardonable sin is further established from the Apostle's exhortation, "Repent

ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the time of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." And the issue as declared, in the subsequent chapter, proves it beyond all controversy; for it is there recorded, that many of them who heard the word believed, and that the church was speedily increased from three to five thousands.

The account also which St. Paul has furnished of himself, in his first Epistle to Timothy, bears upon the point. He tells us, that he was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious, but that he obtained mercy because he did it *ignorantly* and in unbelief. We cannot, for a moment, suppose him to have intended that his ignorance and unbelief were the moving cause of the divine mercy, but we may fairly conclude that had the Apostle done *wilfully* what he did *ignorantly;* had he done with a *revengeful spirit* what he did in *misguided sincerity*, he would have committed the unpardonable sin, and would not have obtained mercy. Therefore he emphatically says, he obtained mercy, he was not beyond its range, he was not the perpetrator of the unforgiven sin, because he did it *ignorantly* in unbelief. This appears to us the fair interpretation of the apostle's language, and is best calculated to preserve the force of his reasoning, and the tenor of his statements. He did not persecute the

church as an open enemy to holiness, for as touching the law he was a Pharisee, and exceedingly precise; but he enlisted in the cause of opposition under the influence of a mistaken zeal. This he has assigned as the reason of his inveteracy in his account of himself to the Philippians, prior to his conversion, "Concerning zeal, persecuting the church." And thus it appears he did not pursue his errand of cruelty with a view to exterminate religion, but not having the veil of ignorance removed from his mind, he imagined he was doing God service in the sins he committed.

Therefore the force of our Saviour's plea may be easily apprehended—supposing him to have recognized the serious distinction between a sin of wilfulness, and a sin of ignorance—between a sin unpardonable (Matt. 12 Ch:) and a sin that might be forgiven. Or as though he had said, "Father forgive them, for their sin is the fruit of their ignorance rather than malice—they err, being blinded"—"They know not what they do"—Their sin is not unpardonable. "*Father, forgive them!*"

But though there is a momentous difference between that which is done *wilfully*, and that which is done *ignorantly*, let it not be supposed that *ignorance* is *innocence*. It is not the *unpardonable* sin, but still it is sin! And just as the acorn is the oak in embryo, so the sin of ignorance contains, in its

seed, all that is polluting and destructive. Ignorance shuts the door of the human heart that Satan, the strong man armed, may keep the dilapidated palace he has entered; and that sitting upon the throne of the sinner's affections he may incite to sins of wilfulness. All ignorance is the offspring of sin; therefore as the child partakes of the nature of the parent, ignorance partakes of the nature of sin.

There is a lamentable error insinuating itself into the minds of men, against which we cannot sufficiently contend. We refer to the propensity of supposing that what is done *conscientiously* is done *innocently;* that what is pursued *sincerely* is pursued *safely;* and that what a man does ignorantly is altogether excusable. Nothing can be more preposterous, more illogical, or more unscriptural. Such a ridiculous persuasion allows every man to choose his own religion—it substitutes the darkness of the human mind for the light of divine revelation—it denies the prerogative of the law to determine what is sin, and what is not sin; and bestows that prerogative upon the purblind understanding of the creature—It makes man his own Legislator, and combines, in the same creature, the contrary characters of criminal and Judge.

It establishes a fellowship between an ignorant Idolater and an enlightened Christian, and SINCERITY is the altar to which both may bring their

offerings! It fosters a pretended union between light and darkness; for the Romanist dwelling in the blackness of tradition, and the Protestant living in the sun-shine of inspired revelation, may both be regarded as worshippers of God provided both be *sincere*. Away with such extravagant and ruinous assumptions. The cross is the centre of unity; but it disdains all communion between light and darkness, between truth and error. It frowns upon all such unhallowed interchanges, however plausible the motive that may espouse them.

St. Paul was *sincere* in his persecutions, but was he *innocent*? He was aiming to do God service, in the destruction of the Church of Christ, and was conscientious in the method he employed, but was his service acceptable? Was he assured that because he had done it ignorantly, he was no transgressor? On the contrary, he concedes his guilty and deplorable condition; he felt himself less than the least, and not worthy to be an apostle, because he had persecuted the church of God; and only looked for peace and forgiveness through the blood of the Redeemer. Indeed if ignorance were not a sin, then our dear Lord in praying his heavenly Father to pardon it would have prayed without occasion. But neither ignorance, nor conscientious motive, nor sincerity, can disprove the existence or annihilate the consequences of sin.

Alas! how often have we heard it avowed that every man has a right to choose his own religion, and that if he be only sincere, God will accept him through Christ—Is not this exalting sincerity against revelation? Is it not allowing man to choose his own gospel, instead of insisting upon his submission to the gospel of God! We admit, as far as the *forms* of religion are not revealed in the New Testament sufficiently explicitly, man has a discretionary power—this however he must employ devotionally, and not to the invalidation of any revealed truth. But as to religion itself, or as regards the fundamental principles of Christianity, we maintain that man has no discretionary power whatever, nor is he authorized, under any circumstances, to depart one jot or tittle from the inspired word and testimony.

Whether he shall pray with a form, or without a form—whether he shall preach an hour or half an hour—whether he shall sing one selection of hymns or another—whether he shall wear a gown or no gown—these matters, as they affect no principle, may be fairly determined by each for himself. Nor should one inveigh against another on account of a diversity in these non-essentials. Nevertheless concerning the doctrines and ordinances of Christ, no man is at liberty to choose, to alter, or to mutilate. For these we must have "the Bible

the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible." The oracles of God must be our basis, and the Spirit of God our Teacher. "When the Spirit is come he will guide you into all truth"—Nor can we plead sincerity or expediency for any deviation; at least if it avail before the tribunal of man, it will be rejected at the bar of God.

Under the old dispensation, we find ignorance was sin, and required an atonement—"The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, If a soul commit a trespass and sin *through ignorance* in the holy things of the Lord; then he shall bring for his trespass unto the Lord, a ram without blemish out of thy flocks with thy estimation by shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for a trespass offering; and he shall make amends for the harm that he hath done in the holy thing, and shall add the fifth part thereto, and give it unto the priest; and the priest shall make an atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and it shall be forgiven him"—And the verses immediately ensuing are still more emphatic, "If a soul sin and commit any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the Lord; *though he wist it not, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity.* And he shall bring a ram without blemish out of the flock, with thy estimation for a trespass offering, unto the priest, and the priest shall make an atone-

ment for him *concerning his ignorance* wherein he erred and wist it not and it shall be forgiven him." Now the introduction of a new dispensation has made no alteration whatever in the nature of sin. The breach of the moral law ever has been, and ever will be sin. If ignorance were sin, if it required an atonement under the law; it is sin, and requires an atonement under the gospel. And thus the forgiveness of sin, of any and every sin, has never been proclaimed without reference to sacrifice and the shedding of blood. Therefore when Jesus prayed that his enemies might be forgiven, and when he subjoins "for they know not what they do," he does not adduce this plea as any moving cause of mercy, or as any substitute for his atonement—but rather as being altogether distinct from the unpardonable sin, and so a sin which could be forgiven through the merit of the blood which he shed.

"FATHER FORGIVE THEM, FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO." Ignorance has misled them—that sin of ignorance deserves thine eternal displeasure—but I will atone for it. I make no provision for their faults, but I will make provision for their forgiveness. I plead not for their *ignorance*, but I plead for *them*. I do not adduce their ignorance as having any claim upon thy pardoning love, but I intercede for them in the atoning

efficacy of my own sacrifice. Ignorantly sinful, they deserve eternal death, but "*Father, forgive them*," "*forgive them!*"

Here we may just observe, we do not believe there is any scriptural reason to suppose that the unpardonable sin cannot now be committed, or that it ceased with the crucifixion of Christ—On the contrary, it seems to us quite possible, and indeed instances have presented themselves in our experience, of individuals who opposing their inward convictions, from the love of sin, have denied the fact of divine influence altogether, and spoken of the operations of the Spirit upon others as the result of enthusiasm, hyprocrisy, and even diabolical instigation. Nor are we willing, as it is our duty to warn sinners, to part with this "terror of the Lord," by announcing to them that this is a sin which they cannot commit. But we would introduce it continually as one of the most powerful restraints to presuming sceptics and sensualists, lest "sinning wilfully after they have received the knowledge of the truth (an inward conviction of its reality) there remain no more sacrifice for sins."

How forcibly this voice of intercession, breathing its way from the cross of woe to the throne of God, suggests to us the necessity of *forgiving one another*. In times like the present, when party

spirit grievously divides our Christian energies, and to a great extent neutralizes our usefulness, how necessary to recur to the tender and forgiving disposition of the Saviour. He is not less our Example than he is our Sacrifice. Indeed the apostle Peter expressly tells us, that by his patient endurance, he has left us "an example that we should follow his steps," and the apostle Paul urges us to "consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds."

How can we claim the *dignity* of the disciple of Christ unless we exhibit the *meekness* of our Lord? How can we conclude ourselves to be christians, if we love not the brethren? "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." What pretensions have we to Jesus as our atoning Sacrifice, while we trample upon the precepts he has revealed? How can we plead relationship to him, while we bear no resemblance to him? Indeed the prayer, commonly called "the Lord's prayer" involves the fact, that in seeking the forgiveness of our sins at the hand of God, we have previously forgiven one another! "Forgive us our trespasses"—"As we forgive them that trespass against us."

The recollection of our frailties should ever influence us to forgive. We are all frail and fallible, and if in any instance one has erred more

deeply than another; let him rather be the object of our pity, than the victim of our cruelty. We have none of us been deficient in evil *inclinations*, though a diversity of circumstances may have implicated some in serious temptations we have escaped. Having the same fallen nature, had we been precisely situated and assailed, as they, we should inevitably have fallen by the same foe. Let us therefore aim to restore them in a spirit of meekness, not counting them as enemies, but admonishing them as brethren. Let us look up to Heaven, and say "Father forgive them!"

And should any who have erred be reclaimed from the error of their ways, let us not watch for an opportunity to remind them of their past digression; or by the remembrance of their former weakness or infirmity, manifest that we only adopted some half-measure of reconciliation, when we professed, upon the observance of their contrition, entirely to have forgiven them. Let us *forget* as well as *forgive*—otherwise still brooding over past injuries and frailties, we shall only deceive ourselves in concluding we have pardoned them. Our heavenly Father not only "*forgiveth* all our iniquities," but he has said, "I will no more *remember* their sins." And by this encouraging connexion between *remission* and *oblivion*, on his part, he would have us to understand on our part, that

that sin only is truly *forgiven* which is truly *forgotten.*

Believers are only *securely* kept by the power of God! They owe their safety, not to themselves but to their Saviour. No man is more able, of himself, to endure or resist temptation than another. One may be more vulnerable by one infernal arrow than his neighbour, or more exposed to a certain besetting sin; but there is no difference between them, when each is assailed where the enemy of souls knows him to be most frail. In such an hour, both stand, if God sustain them; but if looking to themselves, and trifling with the tempter's power, they forsake him, both fall. "Hold, thou me up and I shall be safe," must be the daily supplication of all who hope to find eternal life.

How grievous then while a *spirit of forgiveness* is our uniform obligation towards our brethren in Christ, should they offend us,—that we so frequently fail even to develope a *spirit of forbearance* when no offence has been given, but when simply a diversity of opinion upon some non-essential forbids uniformity in all our ways.

All claims to religious superiority, on account of denominational distinction, are as foreign to the New Testament as is error itself. Strife among the disciples, as regards, who shall be the greatest is there considered and censured—and it would

have been well if it had ceased with those with whom it commenced. But alas it continues—the spirit of Diotrephes is displayed, where the spirit of Christ should preponderate; and thus instead of being among the brotherhood, "as one that serveth," each strives for the pre-eminence.

If therefore according to the genius of the New Testament, there is not the shadow of a pretext for one denomination of Christians to assume a superiority, much less a domination over another, how totally inconsistent to divide because we differ! And how manifestly unscriptural to libel a brother with the name of Schismatic merely because he does not fall in with every form or custom which others may prefer. Is this the spirit of forbearance, the spirit of Christ? Or what is that voice, but the voice of bigotry, which exclaims, "He shall see eye to eye with me, or I will not walk with him, I will not wish him well." Or in other words; "I will only tolerate him." Surely in this sense *toleration* itself is *intolerant*, and only a milder name than *persecution*. One denomination of Christians *tolerating* another denomination! One member of Christ's mystical body *tolerating* another member! The eye *tolerating* the ear it cannot dispense with! Such expressions as these should ever urge the prayer of brotherly love, "Father forgive them they know not what they do." They claim a

superiority they cannot support, but upon a carnal foundation, and usurping to themselves supremacy, they refuse others their liberty.

Away with party spirit! Away with "the selfishness of the sect!" When shall we, agreeing in essentials, leave each other unfettered to dispose of non-essentials as we please? Nor virtually steal away from each other the inspired prerogative which the Apostle concedes to the whole body of believers: "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." We will not strive for the superiority of a sect—for the supremacy of a party—or for the uppermost seat in the synagogue. But we will "covet earnestly the best gifts," and aim to pursue the more excellent way of love and forbearance which St. Paul opened so beautifully and so widely to the church of Christ at Corinth.

We will study to find out in what true spiritual superiority consists. And we shall soon be impressed that it is merged in the blessedness of likeness to Jesus and advance in holiness. That it consists in the habitual exemplification of the fruits of the Spirit, and in cultivating communion with God. Wherever therefore we perceive the features of brotherly love most conspicuously—wherever we hear the words of compassion most distinctly—wherever we discern the Spirit of Christ most evidently—whether it be in Episcopalian,

Independent, Baptist, or Methodist—there, and *there* only, we will allow and confess religious and spiritual superiority.

Finally, this intercessory prayer of our Lord's, "*Father, forgive them,*" imparts to us the comfortable assurance of his unlimited and unqualified willingness to save all who come to him. None are placed beyond the reach of his almighty arm—none are dyed with such crimson taints of sin, that the application of his blood cannot make them whiter than snow—none are plunged so deeply in the mire of iniquity that he cannot lift them out of their dilemma. "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God, by him."

> "From the mount of Calvary,
> Where the Saviour deign'd to die;
> What melodious sounds I hear,
> Bursting on my ravished ear;
> Love's redeeming work is done,
> Come, and welcome sinner, come,"

If any sins against the Redeemer were too great to be forgiven, we should point to the enormous crimes of his murderers, and say, Behold them! But Jesus forbids such a conclusion, and entreats their forgiveness. And how clearly was the efficacy of his intercession established after his ascension to heaven, when through the preaching of his name

and salvation, these men whose hands were yet red with his blood, were pricked to the heart, and melted into compunction. Then they remembered his prayer on the cross. "*Father, forgive them;*" and then, for the first time, they valued its fervency, and felt its power. Then they received its fulness into their consciences, even the remission of their sins.

Who then need despair? Though the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint—if such an one, in the anxious moment of new born conviction and contrition, repair to our heavenly Father, and plead the ceaseless intercession of Christ he shall surely be accepted; he shall in no wise be cast out. Though all but eternally lost, he shall be eternally saved—though almost an everlasting captive of Satan, he shall be a king and a priest unto God—though not a hair's breadth from the shades of despair, he shall receive that strong consolation which has ever been found by those who have fled for refuge to the cross of Christ. Though the lost spirits in perdition had even begun to boast another victim, and to count upon another successful enterprise of seduction and ruin—nevertheless their bravado shall be suddenly stilled by the bitterness of disappointment. And the angelic and archangelic hosts, deeply interested in the result, shall shake the heavens, with the music of triumph

and the plaudit of praise, that another prodigal has returned—that another prisoner is liberated from the bondage of iniquity—that another sinner is saved.

CHAPTER IX.

HIS FIXED RESIGNATION.

The Spectators of this affecting tragedy are still in suspense. The hearts of many appear to have grown harder through their deliberate gaze at the crucified Sufferer, or to have become too familiar with cruelty to be sorrowfully impressed. The mantle of darkness is still cast over the earth, and the whole creation appears of heaven forsaken. Those hands which had only been uplifted to bless, are still bleeding; and those feet that had only trodden the path of obedience, and only moved on messages of love, are still tormented.

Around the cross, the callous soldiers now dispute about his garments; not with a view to possess some remembrancer of a Martyr so patient, or a Saviour so divine—(that had been a praiseworthy contention)—but to obtain some paltry remuneration from those to whom they might dispose of them. What hideous barbarity! What brutal

controversy! Immanuel bleeding for a fallen world, and yet he must needs hear the dissonance of his murderers contending for his vesture! Infinitely worse, and far more impious, than if the relatives of a departing fellow creature should embitter his latest moments, by breaking open his will, in a spirit of selfish curiosity, and then upbraid him with its contents.

Never was a scene so harrowing—never had a Sufferer such extensive claims upon the sympathies of mankind—and yet never were tears so few; never was pity so circumscribed; and never did a multitude look with so much apathy upon the flowing blood of innocence. The scowl of Pharisees, the enmity of Scribes, and the sneer of hypocrites refused him an interval of silence; but rather as his anguish increased, they deepened their malicious vociferations and multiplied their revilings.

Yet though he opened not his mouth, as an accuser, or as an avenger, Calvary could not fail to record,

THE VOICE OF RESIGNATION.—"FATHER INTO THY HANDS I COMMEND MY SPIRIT."

"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father into thy hands I commend my spirit, and having thus said he gave up the ghost."

Here we discover the same temper of submission which dictated those memorable words in the garden of Gethsemane, " Nevertheless not my will, but thine be done"—The Saviour, in the midst of his agonies, expresses an entire satisfaction with his heavenly Father's allotment, and having committed to him, the keeping of his soul, in well doing, through life; he now commits it to him, in patient suffering, in death.

Calvary with all its terrors, could not destroy his confidence in God. He desired no portion but that which divine justice could dispense—he sought no inheritance which infinite holiness could not bestow. His father was dear to him; and he felt the sweetness of the relationship when the punishment due to sin interrupted their communion. He sought no consolation elsewhere. As though he had said, " My Father! My Father! thou art my portion; thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption"—" Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee; my flesh and my heart fail, but Thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. My Father! My Father! What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. I commend my spirit to THEE. I seek my reward from THEE. I am satisfied in THEE."

To Thee, My Father, I commend my spirit. Yes, to THEE; though it has pleased thee to bruise me, and to put me to grief—though the fierceness of thy countenance has distracted me—though all thy billows have gone over me—though the vials of thy vengeance have been poured upon me. Still to THEE I turn, to *Thee* I commend my spirit! My Father! My Father! accept this my final bequest. "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do, and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

What an exercise of faith was this! Spiritual confidence bursting through the dark clouds that floated in the atmosphere of suffering; and laying hold of the divine promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Full assurance looking up to heaven, and reckoning upon its blessedness, amid the severities of the cross, the revilings of sinners, and the bellowing of hell. The relation of 'Father' discerned, notwithstanding the wrath of an offended Legislator. A firm belief, intimating amid this strange amalgamation of events that the sequel would be glorious. What confidence in the words, My Father! My Father! What resignation in the placid bequest, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit."!

Unjustly accused and inhumanly traduced—

oppressed by enemies and deserted by friends—racked with lingering agonies of body and mind—assailed by an amount of affliction neither previously nor subsequently accumulated—but none of these combinations could shake the mountain of his confidence, or disturb the resignation of his mind. My Father! I love thee still. My Father! I will trust thee still.

There was no light from heaven to dissipate the awful gloom—there was no celestial brightness to gild this last scene of his existence. Misery without intermission, and melancholy without an antidote. Never was nature so stirred—never was faith so exercised—never was a conflict so immense. But his affiance in God was immutable—he knew well the insecurity of every other refuge, and the unsubstantial character of all human consolations. He had recourse to no inferior resting place, nor did he doubt the promise when the providence overwhelmed him. My Father! My Father! still trembled his lips; and evincing a calmness which no calamity could agitate, a confidence which no misery could diminish, and a resignation which no aggravation could provoke, he concluded so interesting and affectionate an apostrophe with the filial surrender, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit."

To him, all but God was as a broken cistern, or

as a spring of water in the drought of summer. He not only looked upon the face of things inferior, but he penetrated the very heart of them, and thereby discovered their dissatisfying nature. Just as the mechanist would not judge of the excellency of a watch by a glance at the dial-plate, or pronounce it good, because at that moment the hand told accurately the time of the day—but would require to examine the *interior* in order to give an honest opinion—So our divine Redeemer refused to estimate things by their external appearance; and inspecting minutely their springs of action and their internal mechanism, he secured to himself an infallibility of decision which otherwise could not have been obtained. And the more he explored "the earthly," the more he preferred "the heavenly;" and the greater his dissatisfaction with "the things that are seen," the more enlarged his delight in "the things that are not seen." His extended researches into the *terrestrial* only confirmed his conviction of its nugatory condition, and its very contrast with the *celestial*, while it exposed the fallacy of the one, only more fully developed the glory of the other. All around him served as a stepping-stone, upon which planting the foot of piety, he ascended nearer to heaven; and even the cross itself supplied such a stimulus as drew forth the deep seated emotions of his soul,

in those admirable accents, "Father! into thy hands I commend my spirit."

O, that we were imbued with a kindred feeling; that in us this lovely feature was more prominent, and that we were more prepared to meet every dispensation of providence with such noble and cheerful acquiescence. How easy to profess confidence in God, when faith has no difficulty to encounter! How ready to express satisfaction when the lines have fallen in agreeable places! But while we suppose this to be the exercise of a spiritual grace, we deceive ourselves; for it is no more than the impulse of a mind that is gratified, and may be frequently discovered even in men that are not born of God.

A man may have faith in prosperity, but adversity only can prove it; that is so far as we speak of faith in connexion with resignation. Certainly it is possible for a man to prove his faith in Christ, in many ways, when all around him is pleasing and elevating—but to prove that *that* faith is strong enough to prevail in the hour of temptation, or amid peculiarly trying providences, such temptations and providences must necessarily appear. Abraham was a believer before he was commanded to offer up Isaac, but who would have pronounced his faith sufficiently allied to submission, to enable him to make so tremendous and touching a sacri-

fice, prior to this solicitous crisis in his pilgrimage? Previously it might have been inferred, if such a demand were made upon his feelings, his faith would not be firm enough to inspire them with resignation. Subsequently, however, it could not be entertained as a mere probability, for his readiness to stretch forth the slaying knife was the future witness of his deep-toned submission.

Nevertheless we entertain an apprehension, that many of the family of the faithful would draw back in disobedience, were a similar test of confidence in God, demanded of them. And we fear that though they possess a faith which works by love, even "like precious faith" with Abraham, it might yet be a faith so unaccustomed to trial and adversity, that their very approach might paralyze its ordinary activity, rather than provoke an increased perseverance. We know that all trials and afflictions should stir us up from a palsied condition of mind, and call forth the more extended manifestation of spiritual firmness and zeal—nevertheless the sudden appearance of some unanticipated vexation, or the violent rush of the floods either of temptation or anguish, has too frequently prostrated our resolutions, and left us less energetic than before.

Where do we find a contented Christian? How few can truly say, "I have learned in whatsoever

state I am therewith to be content!" The prosperous in this life have grown lukewarm, and setting their affections inordinately on things terrene, want more than they possess, though they already possess more than they require. And the adverse complaining of their hardships, and comparing their lot with other's are far from spiritual submission. All want something they have not, and crave deliverance from something they have. A few less tears, and a few more joys—a few less afflictions, and a few more gratifications—and they think they should be satisfied. The sea a little calmer, the wind a little subdued, the day a little brighter, and they conclude they should entirely concur with the Divine will.

But this is a delusion. For it is not their *circumstances* that dictate present dissatisfaction—but it is an *earth-bound and selfish spirit* which is not rebuked as it should be, and consequently were their circumstances controlled by themselves, and ameliorated in every particular they might specify, that earth-bound and selfish spirit remaining as before, would leave them equally querulous and unhappy. It is a grand mistake to suppose that a mere revolution of circumstances would transform a spirit of disaffection into a spirit of resignation. The reversion might suppress its fretful clamour for a season; but it would only be comparable to the

smothered flame which spreading secretly beneath, eventually bursts forth more formidably. Its nature being the same, its propensions could not be otherwise. And without a thorough change in its inmost disposition, all external vicissitudes, however welcome and delightful, would fail to conduct it into the element of quiescence. Suppose the main spring of a watch to be broken, will any alteration of the balance wheel, or any variation of the face, remedy the defect? Or if the root of a tree be dead, will the purging of the branches resuscitate it? These are not more absurd than the idea that a transformation of our affairs can avail as an antidote against disquietude and peevishness. Experience with her sweeping accents testifies the contrary; for the disaffected are not comprehended in one solitary condition of human circumstances, but are to be found among all conditions. And therefore this palpable truism is enough to confirm the accuracy of our argument, that a cheerful spirit of resignation is not derived from circumstances, either elevating or depressing; but rather that genuine composure, under all circumstances, springs from the possession of a submissive mind.

Thus it is not for us to seek so much an alteration in our circumstances, as to desire the subjugation of a murmuring spirit that mars the sweetness of the sweet, and makes the bitter less sufferable.

Had many who have long sought a complacency of feeling so unsuccessfully, through a series of outward affairs, sought that complacency through the medium of an inward discipline, they would certainly have attained it. But it is as illogical, as it is unscriptural, to suppose, that an equanimity of mind can ever be procured from any variation of extraneous events.

But shall the CHRISTIAN murmur? Are we blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus? Are we redeemed by the precious blood of the everlasting covenant? Are we called out of darkness into marvellous light? Are we heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ? Are we distinguished as the subjects of divine grace now, and promised the blessedness of entire conformity to Jesus hereafter? Are these our present privileges—are these our future prospects? AND SHALL WE MURMUR? Shall WE be fretful? Shall one syllable of complaint escape from *our* lips, or one thought of rebellion be fostered in *our* breast? God forbid.

If so, what will the world say? How will they be won to the standard of the cross, if we faint, and are weary? Shall we not thereby set forth religion in a repulsive form, instead of exhibiting its power to tranquillize the troubled mind, and bring the smile of resignation on the face of self-denial? You, who profess to love the Saviour, and to

have an access to his fulness by the Holy Spirit, let not religion be evil spoken of, through your inconsistency in refusing to drink of the cup that your heavenly Father may hand you. Receive it cheerfully. Let no sullen frown on your countenance mar the image of Jesus, and suffer no expression to escape you that might lead the ungodly to infer you are not fully satisfied with the arrangements of that providence which is as truly a development of unerring wisdom as is the salvation of your soul.

Are your schemes subverted? Say, "It is well." Are your hopes blighted? Say, it is well. Are your trials heavy? Say, "It is well." At least if you cannot attain unto this—if your faith be too weak for such a triumphant exclamation; let your conduct prove you remember the words of David, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it."

Believe that the same disposition which induces your covenant God to give, induces him to take away. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." Whether he gratify, or mortify, He is Love. His wisdom knows what is best, when your misguided judgment would select what is worst. His goodness is as conspicuous in leaving imaginary wants unsupplied, as in providing for those that are real.

All temporary losses will issue in your eternal gain, all transitory afflictions in your permanent perfection, and all painful crosses must, sooner or later, give place to the crown of glory that fadeth not away. Therefore be of good cheer. "Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage and he will strengthen your heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord."

"If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small." But be it remembered, there is a promise for the tender lamb, as well as for the sheep, in the flock of Christ. And indeed the various assurances of divine love and faithfulness seem rather to intimate, than to exclude, a season of trial. However the bruised reed shall not be broken, nor shall the smoking flax be quenched. Seek therefore the spirit of submission to your heavenly Father, and watch against the inward indulgence of a rebellious frame. Repel the earliest encroachment of an injurious selfishness. Be not tempted to think you are competent to choose your own inheritance, or that an uninterrupted prosperity would be safe for you; but pray to feel the heavenly-mindedness of the Poet when he sang:

> Come, Resignation, spirit meek,
> And let me kiss thy placid cheek,
> And read in thy pale eye serene
> Their blessing, who by faith can wean
> Their hearts from sense, and learn to love
> God only, and the joys above.

Or if you desire a higher authority than this, go to the throne of grace when most oppressed and tried—and there, with the example of Jesus himself to fortify you, let these be your words, My Father! My Father! "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." Pursuing this course, you will find Christianity so far from being a system of suffering, or a succession of sorrows, possesses a balm for every wound, and is capable of ministering the most elevated joys, and the most permanent consolations, when every other fountain is sealed, and all the springs of nature are exhausted. "Godliness with contentment is great gain."

Aim daily to commend your *spirit* to your heavenly Father. Do not suppose such a surrender is only requisite in dying moments, or that it will appear enthusiastic in your constant supplications. If you do not commend your *spirit* to him, you commend *nothing* to him. You only deceive yourself, if you imagine you have ever truly committed any thing, if you have hitherto kept back your spirit. Your health, your children, your friends, your circumstances, your trials, are all ulterior to your *spirit*. Commend this—and then all other things will follow in the train, but if you withhold this, you withhold all. The man who has commended his spirit to his heavenly Father has committed to him, all its affections, desires, capabilities, sympa-

thies and destinies. Consequently every sorrow that assails him, and every difficulty that overtakes him, finds him not confiding in his own resources, or with a spirit unprotected—but well garrisoned by the power of God, and amply fortified against those very assaults that would otherwise vanquish him.

Reader, commend your spirit! Commend no less—Your spirit is more valuable than all. If therefore you can keep this yourself, why commend any thing? If you profess to be competent to take charge of the greater, surely you are able to secure the less! How multitudes deceive themselves in thinking they commend much, whereas not having commended their spirit, they have commended nothing.

An immortal spirit not commended to the custody of Heaven, will toss to and fro upon the restless ocean of time, and never find a harbour. But as the over-running flood of Eternity approaches—thus unsheltered, thus alone in the tempest, thus arkless in the deluge, it must inevitably sink into the depths of destruction. Whereas an immortal spirit, entirely given up to the "Wisdom that cannot err", and the "Goodness that cannot be unkind"—though violently blown upon by the winds of adversity, and severely harrassed by the crosses and perplexities of this polluted sphere—shall ulti-

mately rise superior to every agitation, and riding in triumph over each opposing billow shall find at last the haven it desired. There blending with the countless myriads, that endured the same hardships, and revered the same pilot, it shall look back with extacy upon the past surrender, and only desire to perpetuate the committal.—"FATHER INTO THY HANDS I COMMEND MY SPIRIT."

CHAPTER X.

HIS TRIUMPHANT DEATH.

The sufferings of the Saviour, though protracted, were not endless. The cross was not for ever to retain its victim. The travail of the soul was to exhaust itself, and the soul unfettered enter into paradise. Heaven must be victorious. Hell must be vanquished. Calvary, the selected spot, for this momentous and mysterious conflict.

Now Beelzebub summons all his ministers of vengeance, and bids them combine their infernal energies to defeat the vast enterprise of redemption. Now the eventful hour has arrived, in which that warfare must terminate, upon which is suspended the salvation or destruction of millions. An hour upon which the determinate counsel of God had reposed its decisions from eternity, and in which were concentrated all those streams of mercy which should flow forth upon a guilty world to the latest period of time. Eventful hour

indeed! What mind can conceive the importance of such an unparalleled crisis!

Now the imperious cry of Satan pierces the ear of every apostate Cherub and Seraph; and "all the hollow deep of hell" resounds with the echo of his shout, "Awake, Arise, or be for ever fall'n!"

> " . . . . out flow
> Millions of flaming swords drawn from the thighs
> Of mighty Cherubim; the sudden blaze
> Far round illumined Hell. Highly they raged
> Against the highest, and fierce with grasped arms
> Clashed on their sounding shields the din of war,
> Hurling defiance toward the vault of Heav'n."

They plied their malice to the utmost. They repaired to their infernal magazines till they had spent all their ammunition. No weapon had been unemployed; there was not a sword that had not left its scabbard, nor a thunderbolt that had not been hurled. A fallen world, mid Heaven and Hell, had aided their revengeful efforts; but the concluding moment arrived, and the denizens of perdition were completely defeated. All around the tragic spot then heard,

THE VOICE OF TRIUMPH.—"IT IS FINISHED."

"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said "It is finished," and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."

What a glorious conclusion to so ignominious a death! Victory the expiring word of the Sufferer! The grave, the Amen to his humiliation! Eternity the duration of his glory! How unexpected must such a shout have been, paralyzing for a moment the tongues of a turbulent and malicious multitude, that watched and wondered where and how the scene would end. No sigh of disappointment was heard—no groan of despair was heaved — not a feature of defeat was beheld. They waited for a lingering and a faint "Alas!" to conclude his utterances, but how were their expectations perplexed, when with a *loud* voice, he exclaimed—"IT IS FINISHED!"

Here the deepest trial was concluded with the noblest triumph; and as no battle was ever so difficult to fight, no victory was ever so wonderful to achieve. Such blood never before was shed, and such effects from other blood never were announced. A crown of thorns was never worn so patiently, but the diadem of glory is the result of its reproach.

How must his fond and agonizing mother have rejoiced; (if joy could soothe her breast so near the cross) how must her fainting spirit have revived, or gathered fresh support, when words like these rushed on her ear, amid the din of the multitude. "It is finished!" O, could she not now wipe her

tears away? Could she not now go home with John, to whom she was bequeathed, and say to him, and he to her, It is finished! It is finished! How could she despair, or murmur against heaven? His death was her loss, but still it was her gain. She had lost a Son, but she had found a Saviour! Her Son was dead, but her Saviour was alive! Natural ties were dissevered, but heavenly relationship remained! Who would not give a Son for a Saviour? She made a cheerful sacrifice, and she received an ample reward. She mourned as her Son departed from the earth, but he went to prepare for her a mansion in heaven!

It is finished! Now the earliest promise of mercy was fulfilled, which fell like heavenly music on the ears of our first Parents, and which hushed their sighs and checked their tears, when at the command of an offended God, they left the blissful groves of Paradise. For the seed of the woman had bruised the serpent's head. Jesus had spoiled principalities and powers. The Son of God had accomplished the purposes for which he was manifested, and had destroyed the works of the devil. He had led captivity captive, and sealed the victory with his blood. He had blotted out the transgressions of his people, as a thick cloud, and as a cloud, their sins.

It is finished! O, how these words deepened

the disappointment of hell. Devils knew and trembled, but they neither loved nor adored. They felt his power, but they hated its effects. He swayed the sceptre of triumph over their dominions, converted their boasted armour into chains of bondage, and having thus taken them in their own craftiness, fearlessly holds them in perpetual subjugation. A darker shade of darkness than before, that moment overspread their habitations, and profound despair completed the awfulness of their element. They may distress his members, but they cannot destroy them; and just as the worrying of the dog drives the sheep nearer to the Shepherd, so the exerted malice of Satan against the fold of Christ only hurries the flock closer to his side.

"IT IS FINISHED!" Now the temple's sacred veil was rent in twain, from top to bottom, and those mysterious symbols which for long centuries, had been curtained from the public gaze were openly exposed. The mercy seat, with its cherubic wings that overshadowed, and the golden ark that covered the testimony, were no longer concealed. There was no further need of types and emblems, which dimly adumbrated an offended Deity, and an approaching Saviour; for reconciliation was effected, and the promised Messiah was cut off.

It is well known that Jesus expired at the usual time of the offering up of the evening incense.

And therefore the priest must have been in the temple at the time the veil was rent, as also those who assisted him. They must have both heard and seen this singular phenomenon, and being eye witnesses, and knowing that no adversary was nigh, they could attribute it to nothing short of a divine interposition. The following account of this veil is given by the Jews: "The thickness of the veil is a hand's breadth, and it is woven of seventy-two threads, and every thread has twenty-four threads in it—it is forty cubits long and twenty broad, and is made of eighty-two myriads; (which is either the number of the threads in it, or the sum of the golden pence it cost) two are made every year, and three hundred priests wash it."

How surprising that a veil of this description should have been rent in twain, and how impossible to attribute it reasonably to less than omnipotence. But how delightful to discern the thing signified by such an event! Not merely was it the temple rending its garments at the death of its Lord and its Antitype—not merely did it set forth the rending of Christ's flesh—not merely did it announce the fulfilment and abrogation of the ceremonial law—but it implied, most beautifully, that the way into the holiest of all was now made manifest, and that being *first* accessible to Christ, who entered by his own blood, it was *afterwards*

for ever open to his church, having the mark of that blood upon them.

"IT IS FINISHED!" The shadow gave place to the substance—the type saw its antitype—prophecy clothed itself in the light of consummation—and promise no longer putting off its blessings to a future day, breathed them "on all sides round" from the hill of Calvary. The true Azazel was slain, and the combination of types so indispensable under the old dispensation, to point out the thing signified, or fully to delineate the Divine mind in their ordination, was summed up most expressly, in the expiatory sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption met together in his person and work, and his mediatorial office so imperfectly pourtrayed, prior to his incarnation, was now most fully and luminously proclaimed. The weakness of metaphor blushed and fled before the object it prefigured, just as the queen of night is lost in the brightness of the risen sun. The Messiah no longer wrapped in the swaddling clothes of Jewish ceremonies, then appeared the full orbed Sufferer, and the atoning High Priest.

"IT IS FINISHED!" The vials of God's righteous indignation against sin were all emptied. The curse of the law was removed. The debts of the whole family were paid by the Elder Brother. The

claims of divine Justice were acknowledged and discharged. Sin was fully atoned. Salvation equitably accomplished. Heaven opened to all believers, of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the High Priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world, but now once in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself." "For by one offering, he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified."

"IT IS FINISHED." The earth is convulsed, the mountains shake, the rocks tremble, and all nature is moved at the death of her Lord. The graves are opened, as by an influence unperceived, and many of the righteous dead only wait the resurrection of their Saviour, to quit the darkness of the sepulchre themselves! The pale centurion smites on his breast, and no longer can withhold his conviction, "Truly this was the Son of God." The doom of Jerusalem is sealed, and the curse which her sons and her daughters so impiously desired, "His blood be upon us and our children," only slumbers till the purposes of Heaven are accomplished.

"IT IS FINISHED." Now the Redeemer dismisses his spirit. He breathes out his soul into the bosom of his Father, and enters into rest. The harps of angels are no longer unstrung; his dying words have added melody to that which was before melodious, and glory to that which was previously glorious. Every voice tells of his triumph, and every heart is overpowered with the fulness of his love, and the depths of his sympathy. Heaven is itself again, for Jesus has returned. No more the man of sorrows, the intimate of grief—but the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

> Lo! Seraphim and Cherubim appear
> With Angel and Archangel—rank on rank
> In wing'd array of infinite extent
> And brightness —to conduct the Lord of Heav'n!
> Now lift your heads, ye Everlasting Doors,
> Receive the King of Glory.

The glorious work is done. The greatest mystery, the deepest tragedy, the keenest sympathy, and the fullest mercy mingle in this enterprise. To create the world was nothing in comparison with the redemption of the church. To ordain the laws of nature, to contrive all her intricacies, to regulate all her functions, were an easy task, as placed in juxtaposition with the outworking of the economy of grace. The *breath* of God was enough for the

one, but the *blood* of God was necessary to the other.

To finish salvation, Omnipotence must hide itself in weakness, infinite Wisdom must assume a nature that should *grow* in wisdom, and God over all blessed for ever, must put on the habilliments of humanity, and endure the curse. What marvellous condescension, what unparalleled events! When we contemplate their immensity, and the impossibility of finite minds to climb their altitudes, we cease to wonder that men of corrupt inclinations, men wise in their own conceits, should endeavour to reason them away. They are as foolishness to those who possess no spiritual discernment.

Well might the Apostle write of the heights, and lengths and depths, and breadths, of the love of Christ; well might he tell of it as that which passeth knowledge, for "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Now we know only in part, the wondrous theme overmatches our most devoted efforts to attain it; and indeed in that glorious state of being, for which we look, though our faculties will be expanded and invigorated, so as to seclude all possibility of erroneous conclusions, the vast subject will supply an exhaustless contemplation.

How matchless that Redeemer, who could come into a world lying in wickedness, breathe in its noxious atmosphere, associate with its depraved inhabitants, and walk its polluted streets, for more than thirty years, without imbibing even the semblance of its impurities. And still more wonderful, that he should descend into the chambers of the grave, and extend his downward course to the gates of the infernal city, and lay his hand upon them, and effectually close them against his ransomed people; and thus making them secure should fasten the ponderous keys at his girdle, as the pledge of his everlasting triumph. Wonderful beyond conception, that he should battle with them face to face, on the confines of their gloomy territory, where they had immediate access to their innumerable auxiliaries, and could bring to bear against him the whole of their hell-forged armoury; and yet that he should propel them to the darker recesses of their horrific dungeon, and shake all their empire into endless confusion with the shout of victory "It is finished!"

Surely in such a Conqueror, in such a Saviour, sinners may find an antidote against all their fears, and abundant consolation in the varied distresses of a guilty sin-stung conscience. Are they conscious they have rebelled against God; that their sins are extreme both in multitude and magnitude;

that the righteous law pronounces its awful curses upon them as transgressors, and that they can do nothing of themselves to escape the condemnation they deserve?

We tell them, "*It is finished*," is the remedy for all their guilt and fears. The death-cry of the Saviour is the pledge of life to every penitent sinner! The Son of God has endured in their stead, and in the untold agonies of his soul has removed the curse that had been published against them. We tell them, "Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God, that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." We tell them, God requires nothing of them to appease his wrath, or to diminish his ire. This Christ has done once for all, and God is well pleased with his sacrifice, and demands no more. We proclaim to them a work completed—a redemption finished. We do not ask them to atone for the past, or to propitiate an offended God. All this was done on Calvary. We point them to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus, as the meritorious cause of their pardon and acceptance; and affirm that hereby every repented sin is for ever blotted out, and every believer reconciled to God.

These glorious truths have delivered many a sin stung sinner from that fear which hath torment—the fear of wrath—and have filled his soul with joy and gratitude. They do not seclude all sorrow, but minister a new *kind* of sorrow, an *affectionate contrition*, never felt before. They take away a slavish terror, and engender a filial repentance. And the anxious enquirer is led on by the Spirit, who guides into all truth, to discern that despondency and despair are effectually excluded, because He who cried on the cross, "*It is finished*," is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and is able to save them to the uttermost.

The work of Redemption is finished. It is consummated. Not finished conditionally, but absolutely. And let us be careful how we clog the gospel with conditions, as though after all, the atonement were no atonement without faith and repentance. Faith adds nothing to the completeness of the atonement, and repentance is no part of the salvation we receive. The work of Christ, as far as regards satisfaction for sin, was finished on the cross, and therefore it cannot be concluded by the sinner.

Faith and Repentance are evidences of our *personal* interest in the atonement, but instead of arising out of the creature, they are communicated to him through the *worth* of that atonement. And

both faith and repentance must be sought from the same fulness as pardon and salvation. True repentance is no more earthborn, though it is a personal act, than the atonement was the plan of man; but both are revealed as in and through our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is true without *faith* no man can be be saved, without repentance there can be no pardon, and without holiness no man can see the Lord. Yet we must not send sinners to *their own hearts* for faith, that believing, they may be saved; nor to *their own hearts* for repentance, that repenting, they may be pardoned; nor to *their own hearts* for holiness, that sanctified, they may see the Lord. But rather we must insist, that the graces of faith and repentance and holiness, can only be found in Him who has made the atonement, and finished our salvation. And thus sending sinners for faith and repentance, where we send them for pardon and redemption, we represent Jesus as all in all to them; and declare him to be the reservoir of every spiritual blessing.

Just as in nature, he who supplies the food must supply the appetite, and the creature can create neither; so in grace, he who atones for sin must bestow repentance on the sinner; and he who has the fulness of provision must impart the desire to receive it. This is Jesus who has said, "Ask

and ye shall receive." "Seek and ye shall find." "Look unto me and be ye saved." Therefore we affirm that faith and repentance must be sought not in the resolution or natural strivings of a sinner, that when he believes and repents he may go to Jesus for salvation; but from the hand of Him, who is exalted to give that very faith and repentance which are the pledges of forgiveness.

Nor let any sinner virtually destroy the force of the Saviour's dying exclamation, or rob the words, "It is finished," of their emphasis, by supposing that the validity of the atonement depends upon his willingness to receive it. Or that the tears of his penitence, and the exhibition of his faith must mingle with the perfect righteousness and atoning blood of Jesus Christ in order to his acceptance before God. Salvation is by grace from first to last. It cannot be partly by grace and partly by works; an absolute atonement, and yet a conditional one; and therefore if faith and repentance be termed conditions of salvation (as they are by some good men) we must describe them as conditions which Christ is exalted to bestow, and not as conditions which the sinner is to provide for himself.

If a building be finished, and its symmetries are complete, the addition of one single stone occasions disproportion and deformity. So if the

righteousness of Jesus Christ be complete, and if an atonement be fully made, nothing can be needed from the creature to perfect them.

The creature needs a fitness to receive them, for unless he receive them he has neither part nor lot in the matter; but this fitness is not proposed to him as a condition, with which he is to supply himself, but is revealed to him as an indispensable blessing, in order to his salvation, which the Saviour alone can communicate, and which he has promised to them that seek. Without faith the atonement cannot be received, nevertheless the atonement does not depend upon faith for its value or its efficacy. The value of the atonement, as a propitiatory, arises out of the person and work of Jesus Christ; and the efficacy of the atonement, as a purifier, out of the person and work of the Holy Ghost. Thus the Father *devised* the atonement, the Son *effected* the atonement, and the Spirit *applies* the atonement; communicating also that faith by which the sinner *receives* the atonement. So that neither the intrinsic value, nor the positive efficacy, nor the final extent of the atonement, depend at all upon the creature, but upon the sovereign grace of God, while at the same time the creature is responsible for his impenitence and unbelief.

The robe of righteousness is so *finished* that not one solitary thread of our spirituality or morality

is interwoven with it; it is sufficient for our justification without any addition whatever. And the atonement is so finished that not one tear of repentance, nor one prayer of faith can mingle with it, to add to its validity or worth; it is sufficient for the remission of our sins without any addenda. Nevertheless faith, repentance, and morality, are not to be set aside, or spoken of as things that may be dispensed with, because they are not meritorious, or do not spring from nature, but are to be maintained as the fruits of a salvation full, free, and finished; and as features without which we can have no scriptural hope of the pardon of our sins, or the benefits of the cross. It is for the sinner to believe and repent that he may be saved, but faith and repentance are the gift of God through Jesus Christ; and if he seek them elsewhere he will never find them. And moreover, notwithstanding the willingness of Jesus to save, his compassion and love in the endurance of the curse, and his ceaseless intercession at the right-hand of God—notwithstanding "*It is finished*"—it is an awful and explicit truth, deserving the thought of all the impenitent and ungodly, that, "IF ANY MAN HAVE NOT THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, HE IS NONE OF HIS!"

CHAPTER XI.

HIS GLORIOUS RESURRECTION.

Though the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, covered with scars of inhuman brutality, was taken down from the cross and deposited in the sepulchre, it was not possible that he should be holden of death. The Psalmist David, inspired by the Spirit of God, had long before comforted the old testament church, with the doctrine of his resurrection, in those memorable words, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." And therefore though the Chief Priests and Pharisees went to Pilate, and said, "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again"—though they urged him to command that his tomb should be especially guarded, and obtained his reply, "Ye have a watch, go your way, make it as sure as ye can"—though they immediately went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing

the stone, and setting a watch—Notwithstanding all these precautions, no sooner did the morning of the first day of the week succeed the evening of the Jewish sabbath, than the barriers of the tomb were burst, the stone was rolled from the door, by an angel from heaven, and the slumbering tenant of the silent grave awoke and arose.

Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, were, as it has been well observed, not only "last at the cross," but "earliest at the tomb." And their fidelity was amply recompensed by the glad tidings which they received from the lips of the heavenly visitant, whose countenance was like lightning, and whose raiment was white as snow, who encouraged and comforted them, saying, "Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here. He is risen as he said. Come see the place where the Lord lay." "And go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead, and behold he goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him, lo I have told you." Strong in faith, cheered in heart, and deputed to be the first proclaimers of the resurrection of the Saviour, they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, and even *ran* to carry the information to the disciples.

But their sympathy and zeal were yet to be rewarded more abundantly; they were to be honored

with the first sight of their Redeemer, and the very first congratulation that fell from his lips, after his resurrection, was personally addressed to them. "Jesus met them, saying, All Hail!" The first to look upon him as the victor of the grave, and the first to hear his voice assuring them of his unbroken friendship.

Surely it is impossible to realize but very faintly, the extatic feelings of these devoted women, upon this primary interview with their Lord; nor do we express ourselves more fully than we consider the circumstance warrants, when we affirm, that a more delightful emotion never elevated the bosom of any disciple, and that such an event being altogether without a parallel, as to the interest it afforded, might well occasion an inimitable rapture, in those two enviable minds which were its favored witnesses.

Subsequently Jesus repeated the instructions given by the angel they had previously beheld; and desired them to tell his disciples (of whom he spake as his *brethren*) to go into Galilee, and there they should see him. Indeed he named a particular mountain; no doubt one which he had frequented with them before his crucifixion, where he would meet them. Thither they repaired, and when they saw him, they worshipped, but some doubted. Their faith was too weak to realize so unexpected and

marvellous a spectacle. Then Jesus said unto them, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father; and of the Son; and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo! I am with you alway even unto the end of the world."

In vain did the Elders and the Chief Priests take counsel together; in vain had they recourse to fallacies and ridiculous stratagems, with a view to deny the fact of his resurrection, and to preserve the populace in ignorance on the subject. Their own projects exposed their guilt most fully, and the deceitfulness of their hearts was most loudly advertised by their own barefaced decision, to give large money to the soldiers, that they should affirm, "His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept." As contrary to common sense as to truth. For, on the one hand, if they had slept while on guard, the penalty of death would have been inflicted; and on the other hand, if they were asleep, how could they possibly know that the *disciples* had stolen him away." Thus were the words of Holy Scripture fulfilled, "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness;" and the momentous fact of our Lord's resurrection was borne out by a perspicuity f demonstration that neither

prejudice nor malice could obscure. And has ever since been circulating its melodies and its consolations, through the church militant of Christ, and will continue its extensive travel until the whole company of his saints shall awake up in his likeness.

What a glorious theme for contemplation is the resurrection of Christ. Being, as it is, a doctrine on which depends the truth of the Bible, and the final resurrection of the universal dead. So far from a vague and unnecessary point, it is most intimately connected with the entire scheme of redemption. Thus the Apostle observes in his epistle to the Corinthians, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain; Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ, whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is Christ not raised, and if Christ be not raised your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only, we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept."

The admirable connexion maintained by St. Paul in the verses just cited is most interesting; and

most palpably has he demonstrated that the effects of denying the resurrection are most fatal. As though he should say—prove this false and the preaching of the gospel is absurd! prove this false and the faith of the Christian is delusive! prove this false, and we are deceivers of the people, and liars before God! prove this false, and departed believers have perished in their sins! prove this false, and no men are so miserable as the saints! He then pours contempt upon the puny effort of the disaffected to overturn such a fundamental truism, and concludes the melancholy strain, in which he had pictured the gloomy consequences of the overthrow of the doctrine of the resurrection, with the elevating and soul reviving truth, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept."

Happily for us, upon whom the latter ages of the world have come, we can point the adversaries of a future resurrection, not merely to theories but to facts. We can take the word of God, for our armour, on the right hand and on the left, and can refer them to the mysterious instances, in which the dead have been summoned back to life; and from the inspired oracle, can substantiate the fact that even where putrefaction had begun its forbidding process, and applied its discolouring hues, as in the case of Lazarus, at a word, the cold and

mortal remains have started into living symmetry. We point to the great Captain of our Salvation as the primary witness of the doctrine we espouse. "He is risen." And we continue our argument by a reference to the many righteous dead, who the same day, came forth from their graves, and appeared among the living at Jerusalem. So that we have not a wonder to insist upon which has never been achieved in any instance; but a mystery to enforce upon the universal mass of creatureship which has already been displayed in many of the sepulchred. And thus we argue that what has taken place upon the few, will take place upon the "mighty whole," and the very fact that such a phenomenon has already unfolded its secresies in any of our race, is to us an unanswerable and effectual reply to the objections of the opponents of a *general* resurrection.

But were we unable to refer to any past prodigy—if we could not look up to Heaven, and point to the Lamb in the midst of the throne, and say, "He is my witness of the truth of the resurrection,"—if none who have been inurned in the tomb had ever been known to burst its confines and desert its darkness—if the uprising of no single individual had ever been established since the burial of the murdered Abel—We would, in the absence of these vital and infallible proofs interro-

gate, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?"

We would lay the emphasis upon the mighty Agent to whom this mysterious enterprize is referred—EVEN GOD—"that GOD should raise the dead!" And when we have contemplated a Being whose wisdom cannot be perplexed, and whose power cannot be limited—a Being who made all things at first out of nothing—a Being whose simple fiat "Let there be light" was sufficient to bespangle the firmament with a multitude of luminaries, and to irradiate the whole scene of his creation—a Being who could breathe spirits into immortality, and transmute the dull clod of the valley into the sensitive and intricate nerve! When we have contemplated such a Being in his majesty and might, in his sovereignty and supremacy, in his nature and his operations; we must feel ourselves bound to conclude that such an One, to bring up the dead from the depths of the grave, to raise them, each in his identical body and to summon them around his bar in judgment, needs only to nod or to whisper, in order to the consummation of his decree.

"He spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast." And if he could thus in his aloneness, secure the stability of the symmetries of this vast universe, and determine its occupancy by

innumerable myriads of our race, when as yet there were none; if he could make every moment of time subserve his mysterious and inscrutable designs as the God of Eternity—Unquestionably it requires less than ordinary penetration to find out his ability to restore the scattered fragments of the mouldering frameworks of the dead. And while in the words of Job, we confess to him, "I know that thou canst do every thing," we include the crowning task of resurrection among the all things that are possible with God.

Besides, in the natural world around us, there are many analogies or close resemblances of the resurrection; and these, carrying with them, as they do, indisputable marks of a Divine designer would, of themselves, be more than sufficient to satisfy every enquirer of the probability and possibility of a future resurrection, whose mind was not warped by stubborn prejudices, or steeled with an impenetrable infidelity. Thus we find one of the Father's of the church dilating—"The day dies into the night, and is buried in silence and in darkness; but with returning morning, it breaks the grave of darkness, and reappears from the dead of night. This is the *diurnal* resurrection. As the day dies into the night, so does the summer die into the winter; the sap returns into the root, and lies buried in the ground; the eart

is crusted with frost, or it is covered with snow, and presents the aspect of an universal sepulchre; but as the Spring appears all things begin to rise; the flowers and the plants peep forth from their graves, revive, and grow, and flourish. This is the *annual* resurrection. The corn on which we live, and without which we must perish, is laid and buried in the ground, that it may corrupt and putrify; that being corrupt it may revive and flourish. Our bodies are fed with this constant experiment, and we are sustained in existence by a constant succession of resurrections. And thus we perceive that all things revive by corrupting, are preserved by perishing, and revived by dying. And can it be believed that man, for whom all these things were made, is himself to lie for ever beneath the power of death, so as never throughout eternity to live again?". Thus it appears that the serious contemplation of the transitions of nature, irrespective of the word of God, and the system of theology, is calculated to dissipate, rather than otherwise, any sceptical queries as to the resurrection of the body.

But leaving this train of thought we may observe: The resurrection of Christ is a most animating theme, inasmuch as it is the pledge and pattern of the resurrection of all his followers. It has most gloriously proclaimed to us the truimphs

of the cross, and leaves us not in suspense either as to the design or effects of the tragic event. It dispels the awful darkness that hovered over the mountain of Calvary, so that there every eye may read in its finished tragedy, that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." It proclaims the actual completion of all that had been contemplated by the mystery of incarnation; and writes in living characters, the sympathy and victory of Him, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. No sooner did he defy the bondage of the grave, and ascending from its recesses, walk again upon the surface of the earth, than he declared, All power was given to him over all worlds; and what could be a greater pledge of his church's everlasting welfare, than such an unreserved declaration of his authority and rule?

His resurrection was connected with his infallibility as a Prophet, with his all-sufficiency as a Priest, and with his supremacy as a Prince. And thus it was an event, more or less interwoven with every part of our religion; so much so, that the whole fabric of our faith claims it as its broad foundation. For if Christ be not risen, we are told our faith is vain. That is to say, faith has no proper, solid, or substantial object of dependance, if Christ be not raised. He had declared he would rise again the third day, when speaking in metaphor,

the carnal Jews understood him to signify the rebuilding of their temple. But his inspired historian tells us "he spake of the temple of his body." Consequently his accuracy as a Prophet was fully tested by his death upon the cross, and fully substantiated by his resurrection from the tomb. Or in other words, had he not risen as he said, it would have gone forth to the end of time, that he was not the true Messiah from God, but a false and pernicious Prophet, as many had been before him. As regards his all-sufficiency as a Priest, what was his speedy resurrection, but an open proclamation that every debt had been met and discharged, that the claims of justice had been satisfied, and that his poured out blood had availed to the complete redemption of all that were entrusted to his care. And what could we have inferred in the absence of his uprising, but that his efforts were invalid, and that the virtues of his blood were insufficient to procure the remission of our sins.

Relative to his supremacy as a Prince, what less than the doctrine of the resurrection could announce and maintain it before the world of his enemies? Had he not risen, would they not have concluded he was eternally vanquished? Would they not have deemed him for ever accursed of God? Would they not have inferred that he had

shared the fate of other executed criminals? We conclude therefore that in his resurrection from the dead, he has established his infallibility as a Prophet, his all-sufficiency as a Priest, and his supremacy as a Prince, beyond all fair controversy.

And thus, we have affirmed, he is the pledge and pattern of the resurrection of the Just. As it is written "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with the shout of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first." We look for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body and fashion it like unto his glorious body. "I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live." And again it is written, "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Therefore though we have not yet attained unto the resurrection of the dead; though we are far from the climax of perfection, as set forth in the scriptures; though we know but little, and must wait to know more, until eternity shall disclose its own glories in its own unclouded light—Still knowing that "Christ is risen," though it doth not yet appear what we shall be, we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

Thus the resurrection of Christ is as full of

comfort, and yields as much experimental joy to the believer, as any other revealed truth. For we are not merely to contemplate it as a mysterious principle which implicated only the Head, but as an energy to be exerted in all the members, when he shall come again the second time without sin unto salvation. "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

Is it no consolation to think of such a resurrection? That what is sown in dishonour shall be raised in glory! That what is sown in weakness shall be raised in power! That what is sown a natural body shall be raised a spiritual body! When the principle of moral evil disturbs our devotional moments, chills our affections, bids us

cleave to the dust, and mars our intercourse with God; is it no consolation to look forward to a period when we shall be pure as Christ is pure, and surround the glorious throne without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing? When the good that we would, we do not, and the evil that we would not, we do; when we feel the flesh lusting against the spirit, and tempting us to pollute our course, and to grieve our Redeemer; is it no consolation to look forward to the possession of a spiritual body whose every organ shall be a minister of holiness and peace?

When we lament our weariness in religious engagements, and the language of our blessed Lord to his disciples applies itself forcibly to our expeperience, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak;" when the body of sin and death draws and detains us farther from heaven than we could wish—when dissatisfaction with ourselves drives us into a melancholy, and yet profitable, depression—Is it no consolation to reckon upon a frame of heavenly manufacture, that shall find labor only rest, and activity only ease? Is it no cordial, to anticipate the hour when corporeal infirmities shall have ceased, and eternal vigour and healthfulness defy the perishing touch of death, or the pallid hues of sickness?

When we follow the remains of our departed

friends and relatives to the sepulchre; when we weep the tears of sorrow into the icy deep; and watch the coffin lowered to its base—when we behold it covered with earth—and leave it there—"with faltering steps and slow," retiring to a cheerless home—Ah! Is there no consolation in the thought that we shall meet again, not in the sad circumstances in which we parted, but mutually clothed in the radiant robe of a spiritual body, to avail ourselves ever and anon of all the felicities and dignities of a celestial clime? Surely such ennobling prospects cannot fail to throw a gleam of light into the darkest clouds of tribulation, or to mingle a ray of hope with the deepest melancholy.

Jesus has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. Most difficult is it for us, when the once lovely forms of our departed friends are covered with the shroud, and buried from our sight, to realize the fact that they are as truly alive and as conscious as ever; and that they have only travelled from a region of sorrow to a sphere of unmingled felicity. Nevertheless the voice of revelation instructs us on the point and urges the exercise of our faith, while it aims to soothe our anguish with the glad tidings of the resurrection, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

The mysterious link between the soul and the body is dissolved, but dissolution is not destruction. And even over the gloom of the sepulchre, the believer may wipe away his tears, and exclaim, "O grave, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" Thine is but a temporary bravado, and thy desolation is at hand! Jesus is risen! he will extinguish thy memory, and swallow thee up in triumph. He will banish thee in the morning of resurrection. He will shake thy territories to their centre, and peremptorily demand the sleeping dust of his redeemed. He will be thy plague, O death; and thy destruction, O grave!

Thy footsteps shall not be traced, nor thy shadow discovered. Though now thou art proud of thy undisputed empire, those whom thou hast crushed shall outlive thee, and live for ever when thou art annihilated. For Jesus is thy conqueror! To be favored to address our last enemy in this triumphant strain, when the caresses of relatives are interrupted, and the pleasures of Christian friendship are invaded by his unsparing stroke; can only be the privilege of those who are suspending their eternal all, upon the victory of Jesus, who is the resurrection and the life.

But when we shall be *personally* under the relentless grasp of death—not called to see others die, but to die ourselves—when we shall be impressed

that the last hour of pilgrimage is arrived, and that a few fleeting moments will terminate our earthly career; may we not expect to derive much consolation from the assurance that Christ is risen, and that he has the keys of death and hell at his girdle—That his sleepless eye is upon the grave whither we must be carried, and that he will guard it till he shall come to expose its secresy, and to raise its inhabitant. That being the Redeemer of his people, while the redemption of their souls is precious, the redemption of their bodies cannot be otherwise.

May we not hope to be tranquillized and sustained by the pious confidence, that ultimately the body must be rescued from its foes, and not given over to the lasting dishonours of the tomb—that there shall be a perfect reinstatement of the entire man—and that then he shall be victoriously borne above all possible infirmity. May we not indulge the feeling, without presumption, that even in the valley of the shadow of death, we shall fear no evil; because though cut off from all earthly resources, and sensible of the insufficiency of every inferior resting place, we shall still retain Jesus for our resurrection and our Life! That he will mitigate our pains, allay our fears, and forbid our despair, by reminding us that he has gone into the grave before us, that he claims it as his own instru-

ment of refinement, or as his own vault of safety, and has removed all its terrors—That as it could not detain Him beyond the determined period, so it shall not imprison us longer than his pleasure—Surely we may gather consolations like these from the resurrection of our Lord, though on the eve of dissolution, and on our way to corruption.

And who would not be dissolved to be perfected? Who would not undergo a temporary change, though it should involve a considerable amount of self-denial, and of humiliation, to be hereafter fully assimilated to the glorified body of Christ? Who would, in the littleness of his faith, complain of the severity of the means that will terminate so gloriously and triumphantly? It is impossible for us to conceive of a spiritual materialism, though we are told that which is sown a natural body shall be raised a spiritual body. Matter will not be transmuted into mind. Body will not rise Spirit, but spirituality will be its property. And if the humanity of Christ, when transfigured, was so radiant and so glorious, as to dazzle and defy the vision of his disciples, with the unusual splendour they looked upon, we may scripturally anticipate that the resurrection body will be at least most dignified and magnificent. We know enough to make us long for it, and to make us willing to die, to attain unto it.

No more a clog to the spirit in her holy breathings after God—no more the seat of unholy propensions and misguided appetencies—no more harassed by affliction or oppressed with disease—no more sinful affections to subdue—no more besetting sins to torment. Regenerated flesh! Sanctified matter! Spiritual body! An eye only to look upon the beautiful—an ear only to listen to the melodious—a tongue only to magnify God and his Christ—a heart only to feel after holiness—a hand only to touch the glorious. O, how can we meditate upon these delightful realities of another world, and not long more ardently to enter upon them! How can we know so much of them, as divinely revealed, and feel so little! Lord increase our spiritual-mindedness.

Finally, the doctrine of the resurrection, appears most ostensibly to maintain our Lord's absolute control over the invisible world of apostate spirits. Devils knew him, during the days of his humiliation, and besought him to retard the execution of his vengeance upon them. But soon will the old serpent be bound, and the accuser of the brethren cast down. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil"—And forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise himself took part of the same, that *through*

death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage. Thus his resurrection from the sepulchre furnishes us with the most ample evidence that he had wrested the sceptre of Death from the grasp of Satan, and that as it must needs acknowledge him as its vanquisher, so it shall never prove the destroyer of his members. He has spoiled principalities and powers, and has made a shew of them openly.

Even DEATH, is among the items capitulated by the Apostle, as being in subserviency to the Church of Christ. "All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or life, or *death!* All are yours and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Death that came in by man's disobedience—the most repulsive foe that approaches our race—the most prolific source of domestic sorrow and disquietude—the plague of the young, and the pang of the old—the pioneer of Satan—the cause of widowhood and the mocker of orphanism: this adversary of all ages, walking abroad by day and by night to spread his devastations, and to multiply his victims, is through the triumph and resurrection of our divine Redeemer so tributary to his authority, and so subdued by his governance, as to be at least harmless, though not painless, to every believer.

How inspiring then, and how important the fact, that he who was delivered for our offences was raised again for our justification. He who had been crucified through weakness was raised in power and glory. Vain was the ponderous stone, and equally vain the Roman guard at the entrance of the sepulchre. An angel from Heaven came and rolled it away, and the soldiers struck with amazement fell to the earth. Jesus had abolished death and put on immortality.

Thus Christianity provides for the everlasting honour of the body as well as the endless salvation of the soul; and in its immunities and benedictions leaves all other systems in the shade, or entirely eclipses them with the brilliancy of its provisions. On this point even philosophy itself was foolish—nor did Greece or Rome in all their splendour ever conjecture the resurrection of the dead. It is recorded of Socrates, one of the wisest of the enlightened heathens, that after he had swallowed the contents of the impoisoned cup, and his friends asked what should be done with his body, his pride seemed mortified at their showing any concern about his ashes, which he considered would never afterwards be distinguished from the clods of the ground. But let the same question be preferred to the dying Christian—let him be interrogated in the midst of his frailties and

his struggles; what shall become of his shattered tenement? And you shall see the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus light up his distorted features with the smile of holy expectation, while he tells you that he looks "for the Lord Jesus Christ who shall change our vile bodies, and fashion them like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." You shall witness the cheerfulness of his dying moments, through an inward assurance of a future resurrection unto life eternal, through the uprising of his Lord.

Perhaps, however, we ought not to conclude this subject, without for a moment, adverting to the resurrection of the wicked, on whom the second death will exercise its horrific powers, and for ever heap its torments. O, with what body will they come! We have no authority to conclude that the bodies of the ungodly will undergo any other change, but that from mortal to immortal. They will still be the victims of all the sorrows and sufferings and wretchedness of this earthly state—only their condition will be most tremendously embittered by the assurance of their perpetuity. They will be the subjects of a *weakness*, just *strong* enough to last for ever, and never to sink in dissolution—the creatures of passions never to be gratified—and the prey of diseases that will incessantly disturb them,

but never let them die—All the horrors and agonies of earth, mingling with the dismals, the anguish, and the eternity of hell will be their melancholy inheritance.

For what is the imagery of Holy Scripture, unless it be to supply us with the most elevated reflections upon the beatitudes of heaven, and with the most repulsive dread of the miseries of hell.—This is the reason why both the eternal worlds are described in metaphor. *Figure* is not the antagonist of *fact*. Truth cannot be disproved because the most figurative verbiage is employed to proclaim her solemnities. The imagery of the Bible contains more than mere imagination.

But as though it were impossible that the Divine Being could *literally* describe to us, while in our present condition, either the glories of the celestial, or the gloom of the infernal—he would employ the boldest ideas, and the most significant terms, that he might not leave us oblivious of the one, or reckless of the other, to dream our way through our three-score years and ten, to the borders of an uncertain world. He would so reveal the one, as upon mature deliberation, to make us long for it, and he would so reveal the other, as upon due consideration, to make us loathe it. But after all the ideas that can be formed, and the definitions that can be supplied of the two ulterior states, it must be said

of Heaven, that it must be attained in order to the real knowledge of its blessedness; and it must be said of Hell, that it must be endured in order to the remotest apprehension of its bitterness.

It is not then worthy our immortality to dispute away the fragment of our time, as to the materialism or the immaterialism of the livid flames of perdition; but it is sufficient to be assured by Him, before whom "hell is naked, and destruction hath no covering," that it is either as a place or as a state, material or immaterial, the most subversive of all human hope and happiness, and the most inimical to all those pantings after pleasure and satisfaction, which are inseparably interwoven with the tissues of the mind.

The grand enquiry should be, what is the nature of the change for which I am preparing myself, or to which I am daily advancing? Am I hourly heaping upon myself condemnation, and woe, or am I redeeming the time because the days are evil? Am I meetening my body for an eternal disquietude, or am I mortifying its affections and lusts that it may minister to my endless bliss?—Am I so neglectful of my body now, that this poor weakened tabernacle, this frail fragile framework, will be hereafter one source of my misery, one fountain of my sorrow, one inlet of the curse? Or am I so disciplining it, and so keeping it in holy subjection, by the

help of God, that when it shall spring from the dust, it shall have thrown aside all its weakness and dishonour, and be purified from every particle of pollution?

We insist that any enquiries short of these are an insult to our felt immortality. Let us interrogate, whether our eyes shall look for ever upon the holiness of the Lamb, upon the loveliness of his kingdom, and upon the glory of his sceptre; Or whether they will be blinded with the black and burning darkness of the empire of Satan? Whether our ears shall hereafter listen to the celestial minstrelsy of cherubim and seraphim, and to the incessant hallelujah of the perfected church, and to the welcoming and melodious music of the voice of the King in his beauty; Or whether they shall be deafened with the curses of the apostates, and vexed with the horrisonous howlings of the damned? Whether our tongues shall be employed with the rapturous anthems of the redeemed, originating in a full, free, and finished salvation, or whether they shall only move in impurity, and blasphemy, and curses against God? In fine, let us enquire, whether these various organs of life shall be eternally in tune, to perpetuate our delight, or whether they shall be eternally violated to eternize our woes?

Let us not compose ourselves in our sins, by the presumptive supposition that the regions of dark-

ness are not so gloomy and terrific as the word of God describes; but rather let us conclude that the most awful representation is infinitely inadequate to set forth the horrors of the reality. Hell is not merely one remove from Heaven, but it is the *opposite* of Heaven. Not to be described as a different kind of Paradise, where the flowers are not *quite* so fascinating, and the scenery not *quite* so attractive, and the associates not *quite* so precise and righteous—but as a sphere of positive contraries. So that if the one be life, the other is death—if the one be light, the other is darkness—if the one be liberty, the other is vassalage—if the one be the assemblage of all that is lovely, exquisite, and godlike; the other is a conglomeration of all that is earthly, sensual, and devilish.

Thus by the terrors of an infernal state, we would warn the impious and the presumer—while by the glories of a heavenly state, we would animate the believer. Soon the great day of the Lord will arrive, and the throne of judgment will be planted. The weighty grave-stone shall give way, the barriers of every tomb shall be displaced, and all the dead shall be arranged in one astounding throng. The past will be as nothing, but the future most momentous.

Prepared or unprepared will be the question! The image of Christ, or the image of Belial!

Accepted or rejected for ever! Seeing therefore that we look for such things, what manner of persons ought we so to be in all holy conversation and godliness? Ought we not to be looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus unto life eternal? Ought we not to examine ourselves whether we are in the faith?

Who can be inexcusable, in his apathy, respecting that which should mainly concern him—the immortal welfare of his soul?—"For what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Think, careless sinner, think what are your prospects for another world! Whither goest thou? Die you must. Rise you must. Be judged you must—SAVED or LOST you must. And can you persuade yourself that *a state of salvation*, and *a state of damnation* are so closely connected in their character, or so nearly the same in their sequences, that it demands no thought, no enquiry for which you are bound? "Be not deceived; God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap: He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." Watch! for you know not at what an hour the Son of man cometh.

CHAPTER XII.

HIS GODLIKE ASCENSION.

Forty days having elapsed since the resurrection of the crucified Redeemer—a period sufficiently extended to give such an event all necessary publicity, and to overthrow the subterfuges and equivocations of its opponents—an interval occupied in conversations with his disciples concerning the Kingdom of God, and in fortifying their minds for their approaching persecutions anddifficulties by the assurance of the mission of the Holy Spirit—While he was dilating upon such themes, of the deepest interest to his contracted and tremulous flock, he was suddenly raised from the ground on which he stood, and carrying their astonished sight after him, as far as it could penetrate, he at length disappeared within a cloud, and was received into heaven, and took his seat at the right-hand of the throne of God.

That same Jesus who was dead, and who rose from the dead with all that truly appertains to the nature of man, was exalted to be the executive of the universal government of Heaven, and to enjoy the majesty and glory of God for ever! What a mysterious and delightful consideration, that a man—a real man—should be taken into union with one of the divine persons in Jehovah—and be thus exalted, and revealed as the administrator of the vast purposes of Deity! And what a peculiar nearness do we enjoy, as believers, through this heavenly Mediator, ever presenting our nature, in all its purity and sublimity, before our Father's presence!

But what an excitement must have filled the celestial myriads, what a pause for mingled admiration and homage must have ensued, when the golden gates of the supernal sanctuary rolled back upon their hinges to receive this Lord of life and glory. Well might the cherubim enquire "Who is this King of Glory?" "Who! Who! Who is this King of Glory?" Well might the seraphim interrogate "What is thy name, O King, that we may bow down before thee, and worship thee?" And well might the mighty mass of holy principalities and powers, wait with an intense amazement and delight for those disclosures that should be made to them.

The sweet surprize of the adoring host was however, we may suppose, soon dissipated by the communications of the Redeemer. "I, even I, am He, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made myself of no reputation, and was made a little lower than the angels! I, even I, am He who was born in Bethlehem, of the Virgin Mary, and who was wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger! I, even I, am He who grew in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man! I, even I, am He who was baptized of John in Jordan! I, even I, am He who was led up into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, and who having fasted forty days and forty nights was afterwards an hungered! I, even I, am He who poorer than the foxes which have holes, and the birds of the air which have nests, had not where to lay my head! I, even I, am He who was refused a little water to alleviate my thirst and fatigue, from Jacob's well at Sychar! I, even I, am He, who healed the sick, and comforted the mourner, and wept over the sinner, but who, notwithstanding these offices of love, and efforts of sympathy, was despised, reviled, and rejected! I, even I, am He who taught daily in the temple, but my words were disdained, and my motives suspected! I, even I, am He who sweat, as it were blood, in the garden of Gethsemane, and who being in an

agony prayed more earnestly! I, even I, am He who was visited there by an angel from these realms to strengthen me! I, even I, am He who was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and was crucified on Calvary amid the execrations of the mob, and the agonies of a forsaken God! I, even I, am He who put away sin, by the sacrifice of myself, and who shed my blood to atone for the sins of my church! I, even I, am He who was buried, and who slept in the solitude and darkness of the sepulchre, and was numbered with the helpless dead! I, even I, am He who rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and appeared to many on the earth! Behold I am alive evermore, and see these keys of death and hell, these pledges of my victory, suspended at my girdle! Behold my hands and my feet! Behold my side, from which flowed blood and water! I am the Alpha, and the Omega—the root and offspring of David—the Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus! Equal of Deity and Saviour of sinners!"

Then were heard the voice of many angels, round about the throne, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom and strength, and

honor and glory and blessing." And then did the spirits of the just made perfect pour forth their strains of gratitude and adoration, saying "Blessing and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever"—"For thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God, by thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue and nation, and people; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests."

Never before were such exalted triumphs celebrated in heaven—never were the angelic multitudes so amazed, or their harps tuned to such extatic melodies. And never, never, will they be exceeded, until the consummation of the celestial empire shall be proclaimed; until every chosen child of God shall possess his prepared mansion, until the Son shall deliver up the Kingdom to the Father, and "God shall be all in all." Never till that illustrious climax shall be attained, will the raptures that fired the bosoms of the glorified, upon the entrance of the Redeemer to the zenith of his promotion, be excelled or equalled. What new song will *then* be sung, what new emotion will *then* be felt, what new delights will *then* break upon the wondering minds of the perfected assembly, it is altogether vain to conjecture. Angels and men shall *then* behold, what never was beheld before. And may we not derive an abundance of satisfac-

tion, and comfort, from the ascension of our Saviour into heaven. Is it nothing that we have such a friend above the skies? Is it nothing that we have so great a High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, within the veil? Is it nothing that the Head of the church is crowned as the representative and pledge of the perfection and glory of his members?

May we not occupy the vantage ground, and in the face of all our enemies exclaim, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea rather that is risen again, who is even *at the right hand of God*, who also maketh intercession for us?" May we not be sure that if Satan could not conquer the Captain of our salvation, when in his humiliation and weakness, he shall not vanquish the most feeble in his army, now that he reigns in his majesty and glory? May we not infer that he will support us in the day of battle, and cover our defenceless heads with the impenetrable shield of his power in every encounter? May we not conclude that since no weapon formed against him could prosper, since no arrow shot from the infernal bow could *mortally* wound him, since no missile weapon could fasten so deeply as to prevent the spoliation of all his adversaries, and their perpetual subjugation—so no combination of opposition can possibly overthrow his people.

Not because we are strong as he—sinless as he—

filled with the spirit without measure, as he—but because he hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Because he has promised to plague them that hate us, and to tread down the strength of our enemies. And because he and his members are so indissolubly united, that they never can be separated—and therefore what is done to them, he considers as done to him, and is as much determined to parry off the blows of cruelty and destruction from us, as from himself. He loved us enough to die for us, to be accursed for us, and thus we have the most ample evidence that he will never give us over, or allow us to be wrested from his hand by our foes.

He is exalted with a human heart touched with the feeling of all human infirmity: and though he no more weeps the tears of human tenderness, but is now on the throne of universal sovereignty, nevertheless the flow of his compassion is as constant and as extensive. He no longer mingles his tears with the woes of his members, but he puts forth his hand to sustain and supply them. And thus though the *manner* of extending his pity, and of exhibiting his regard, is varied, the *degree* of his solicitude is unabated. The tears of his earthly sorrow are only lost in the ocean of his heavenly sympathy.

"Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be

made like unto his brethren that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted"—And what is the consequence of this gracious truth? It encourages us to approach him as the fountain of all consolation and the dispenser of all spiritual benefits. As the man who was tempted as we are—who wept as we weep—who felt as we feel—and whose glory and promotion, so far from diminishing his pity have only enlarged the manifestation of his sympathy, and provided a wider channel for its effusion. He was crucified that he might atone—he is glorified that he may dispense the blessings of the atonement he has made. He was crucified to bring down the boon of forgiveness to the offending family—he is glorified to raise up the offending family to the communion of their forgiving God. He was crucified to put away sin—he is glorified to sanctify the sinner. He bore the cross that we might escape eternal death—he wears the crown that we may attain eternal life. And so intimately connected is his humiliation as a Priest, with his enthronement as a Prince, that he who experiences the virtue of his blood in the purging of his conscience, cannot fail to inherit hereafter the immunities of his kingdom.

Let us therefore look by faith, amidst the dangers and difficulties of the way, from the cross of suffering to the crown of glory. Let us seek spiritual refreshment by the contemplation of things that are not seen, when things that are seen only embitter and depress. Jesus is familiar with all our afflictions—conscious of all our trials—observant of every perplexity—and continually sends forth his angels to minister to us in our emergencies. Nor are the details of domestic life unknown to him—he sees the anxious mother bending her knee, and breathing out her fervent supplications for her infant brood—he hears the cry of the industrious father on behalf of his offspring—he marks the groan of the invalid, the tear of the widow, the sigh of the orphan, and the oppression of the injured. Nor can there be a circumstance of embarrassment, or a condition of sorrow, that can either weary his patience, paralyze his power, or overmatch his experience.

But perhaps the powerful and benevolent effects of his ascension and enthronement have not appeared so conspicuously in any thing as in the success of the perpetuated Gospel. Treated as an unprotected outcast on earth, yet under the broad wing of heaven, its simplicity and its purity have been preserved. And although it has been disdained by the bulk of the rich and the mighty in

every age—although it has been menaced by earthly authorities, and assailed by the fire of persecution continually it has only been warmed into greater energy by the very flame that was kindled to destroy it; and its heavenly origin has been only the more palpably demonstrated by the severe reproaches which have been heaped upon it by an apostate world.

Not many days after our Lord's ascension, his disciples being assembled together in an upper room at Jerusalem, waiting for the promise of the Father, the foundations of the house in which they were convened were shaken; and the noise of a mighty rushing wind was heard; and the Holy Spirit descended upon them, and sat upon each of them in cloven tongues like as of fire; and they spake with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Then the Ambassadors of the cross, endued with power from on high, according to their Saviour's command, went forth into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature. They were not learned schoolmen, or affluent dignitaries, or men of worldly authority that could command universal homage and respect; but with a few exceptions they were men of low extraction, as fishermen, tax-gatherers, and net-menders. Nevertheless the word of God grew mightily and prevailed. And though its advocates were threatened

with racks and dungeons, and with every species of cruelty that the malignant enmity of the carnal mind could devise, still undaunted by opposition, and emboldened by the artillery of heaven, they went forward conquering and to conquer. The triumphs of the cross were too conspicuous to be denied, and uniformity of success on the part of the disciples added sinew to the arm and zeal to the effort.

And although the first preachers of the Gospel were endued with miraculous power, and the agency continued to the church, subsequently, is entirely divested of such mysterious appeals to the outward senses—yet the faithful proclamation of the agonies and victories of Jesus—the uplifting of Christ in the unfolding of his death, resurrection, and ascension, has in every age been owned and blessed with considerable success. Comparatively modern times have borne testimony to the truth that the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither is his ear heavy that it cannot hear. The preaching of a Luther has been sufficiently effectual to shake the dominions of papal tyranny to their very foundations—the labors of a Whitfield have been followed with such an influence as has occasioned a marvellous shaking among the dry bones in Great Britain and America—and while many of the servants of God have passed

their career in comparative solitude, and have produced no particular excitement beyond the solitary spot where Divine providence stationed them, nevertheless we are encouraged to believe that their testimony also has been honored with such pleasing effects, as could not leave them, for a moment, to doubt of the power of their Master's resurrection and ascension.

A solitary Hindoo, sitting beneath the shadow of the cross, or an isolated Chinese, consulting the pages of inspired revelation with penitence, or a lonely Musselman, rejecting the errors and impurities of the Koran, are severally most interesting effects of the ascension of Christ. But when we contemplate the incalculable amount of mercy which that event has ensured to millions of our race for more than eighteen hundred years—the saving energy which it has manifested all along with the preaching of the Gospel, to the conversion and sanctification of immortal myriads—the timely sympathy which it has imparted to the helpless sufferer, and the blessed hope with which it has inspired the trembling penitent—the aspect of divine longsuffering and forbearance which it has spread over an apostate world, and the composure and tranquility with which it has imbued the dying believer—When we thus employ our faculties of consideration, as to the vast advantages of

our Redeemer's ascension in its bearing upon the promulgation of the Gospel, we cannot but conclude they are extreme and unrivalled. There has accompanied the open declaration of the work and glory of Christ, such a matchless and salutary influence—such a transforming and comforting power—that men and women in every age have *experimentally* learned the holy connections of Divine truth, and have been assured that Jesus who died on the cross, rose again from the dead, and ascended to glory. And the hallowed fire that has glowed in their bosoms has compelled them to believe that the Son of Righteousness has risen never to go down.

Still there is much to be achieved before the symmetries of nature shall be destroyed, and this dispensation of things shall be consummated. There is much to be done, and perhaps much to be suffered, before the universe shall be wrapped in the flames of the foretold conflagration. The chariot of the Gospel still rolls its wheels of salvation along the earth, and the vessel of sympathy still spreads her missionary sail to visit heathen lands. God is in the midst of us, and that to bless us.

O that our efforts to snatch brands from the burning were more persevering—that we were prepared for an increased degree of self-denial—that we could more fully realize the obligations

that devolve upon us—that every believer would lend his energy and employ his talents to gather in the immortal harvest, to the garner of God! Salvation is by grace—but no system is more practical, or involves more of human effort and industry. Salvation is not without means—or at least if in any particular case the Divine Being has dispensed with them, this can be no plea for our neglect of them. We have too long neglected them, we have thought too little of the groans and miseries of six hundred millions of the human race dead in trespasses and sins—no sabbath dawns on their dwellings—they have no bible—they hear no Gospel. And yet what a large proportion of that instrumentality with which Christ has endowed his church is unemployed!

How much *money* lies dormant that might be in circulation for spiritual purposes! How much *time* is wasted that might be devoted to the "work of faith," and "labor of love," for Christ! How much *talent* is sacrificed at the shrine of personal ease, that might be occupied in gathering for the Saviour! How much *health* is abused in what are termed innocent recreations, that might be spent in recovering the sinner from the error of his ways! How much *breath* is breathed in trifling conversation that might be turned into a silent stream of

fervent and effectual prayer! The blessing is from God, but the means are with us.

Nor are the means even unaccompanied by promise; "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." "My word shall not return unto me void." "In all labour there is profit." "Lo, I am with you alway, to the end of the world." "They that honor me I will honor." Cheered by such exceeding great and precious promises, may we go forward in the full assurance of faith, being stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

Especially let us remember the last words of our Redeemer to his disciples before his ascension "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." And may this actuate us individually to engage ourselves as his obedient missionaries, in every sphere in which we move, knowing he has said "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth."

Pilgrimage is short—soon the hand that now writes will wither in the tomb—the eye that now reads will be closed in death—the spirit that now prays the foregoing pages may be accompanied with the effectual blessing of God to the spiritual good and growth of many, will be gathered to

her heavenly asylum; and then what an honor to have been, in any measure, an humble instrument, of spreading the knowledge of Christ and of winning souls to his cross. Earth is the field of incessant labor, and Heaven the paradise of eternal rest.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

READER!—"HOW MUCH OWEST THOU MY LORD?"

SUCH a question seems most forcibly to present itself, when we contemplate the amazing sacrifice which our Divine Redeemer made for his Church when he suffered on the cross, and the vast benefits which thereby accrue to us as believers.

The silent meditation of his dying love and mercy calls forth the grateful enquiry, What, my Saviour, can I do for *Thee?* How shall I begin to calculate the sum of my obligation to *Thee?* In what way can I shew, I love much, having much forgiven? Tell me, my Saviour, tell me, for

> "Love so amazing, so divine
> Demands my soul, my life, my all."

It is not, however, our intention to consider this striking and suitable interrogation, in its general and extensive bearings upon the entire life

and conversation of the Christian. This would be too formidable for our present purpose. But rather to confine our remarks to the paramount and sweeping claim of our common Lord upon THE SILVER AND THE GOLD, with which he has entrusted his followers, as his temporary stewards.

We freely acknowledge, we are constrained to treat the inquiry in this form, from a deep and tearful conviction that this branch of practical godliness is fearfully overlooked. As also from the palpable fact that Ministers in enforcing the apostolic exhortation "ready to distribute" "willing to communicate," are too frequently treated with contumely, and at least frustrated in their designs, if indeed the purity of their motive be not suspected.

The hallowed and melting recollection that all the stewards of the Saviour are bought with his blood, ought to secure to him the undivided heart of every one of them. The affections and faculties of their souls should be offered on the altar of a willing obedience—their bodies should be presented as a living and constant sacrifice—and their circumstances brought uniformly to bear upon the promotion of his glory and the extension of his kingdom.

Indeed if this effective stimulus—the dying love of Jesus—fail to engage the heart and hand, it

would be next to an absurdity to resort to other inducements, or to anticipate success in seeking an enlarged devotedness upon any other principle. For that Individual who can see the blood flow from the veins of the Saviour—who can hear him exclaim "It is finished,"—who can behold him as the Shepherd laying down his life for the sheep, and yet grudge him a liberal and zealous manifestation of gratitude and regard, would not be melted down into sympathy by the ardency of an eternal perdition.

"That they who live, should not henceforth LIVE UNTO THEMSELVES, but to Him who died for them," is the salutary and practical lesson which Calvary writes upon the consciences of believers in letters of blood. And yet the conscience of the man of God becomes so deteriorated in its sensibilities by worldly conformity, and so biassed and molested in its decisions by an insinuating selfishness, that he too frequently over-rates, to a considerable extent, the *degree* of his spiritual mindedness, and submission to Christ. "My brethren these things ought not so to be."

The system of having all things common, which for some time, existed in the primitive church at Jerusalem, though no doubt found impolitic, and therefore soon discontinued—is worthy of emphasis, as serving to demonstrate the benevolent spirit by which the members of that church were actuated.

No sooner were they brought to the cross of Jesus than they learned that *the silver and the gold* were his—that they had it not for purposes of worldly fashion and aggrandizement—and that it was not to be accumulated to be bequeathed to ungodly children, who by its abuse would only augment the degree of their future condemnation.

The weed of Selfishness was most effectually withered—they could not live to themselves—and whatever defects might or did arise out of an attempted system of equality, so as to neutralize its usefulness or to dictate its abandonment, these by no means eclipse the light of a benevolent and self-denying example whose winning lustre still invites our imitation.

Let it be remembered, the time has arrived, when it must be said there is much wealth in the *church*, as well as in the world. We refer not to the church, as sustained by the riches and patronage of the state, but to the church as consisting of pious men and women of every sect and denomination. There is wealth in the church—One good man has a million of money—another half a million—others two or three hundred thousand pounds—and many from thirty to a hundred thousand each—Then there are others who though not so affluent in point of bona-fide property, are nevertheless deriving an income from a well established and steady

trade of from one to five thousand per annum. And therefore if ever there were a period when those passages of scripture which bear upon riches and the appropriation of property were needful to be enforced—if ever their application to any era were unquestionable, it is the present.

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." "The care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." "Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." "That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate." "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal, &c." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

"And be not conformed to this world." "Let your moderation be known unto all men." "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." "And having food and raiment, let us be

therewith content." "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

Now we know not that we should be fairly chargeable with any extravagancy of impression, when we affirm that such counsels and exhortations, such warnings and avowals, are more applicable and more requisite at the present than at any former time. And if so, how great our lack of christian courage and faithfulness, if we fail to enforce them? We may be termed too precise by the mere professor, who would welcome no self-examination, and self-denial; but surely there are many who will say: "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness, and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil that shall not break my head."

When were the members of Christian churches, in a temporal sense, more prosperous? When did they endure less hardships? When were our Ministers surrounded with deacons and people so affluent? When was the Church more qualified to plant commodious and respectable places of worship in the land; Or to disseminate the truths of the Gospel through the length and breadth of the world?

And yet when was there more conformity to the world? When was the Church less liberal compared with her resources? When was the wealth of reli-

gious families more selfishly applied? Men of God multiplying their domestic expenditure to a fearful amount—expending more in superfluities than in essentials—merely because they will vie with others, and come behind in no degree of worldly respectability and public opinion. And of others more reserved and less prodigal, it may be said, they add more and more to their possessions year after year, having already more than is necessary for their comfort, or available to their use.

What is this after all but living to themselves? Estimating the pleasures and riches of this life far beyond their value, and considering their own fondness of luxury to have a prior claim upon their temporal resources, or at least to be more anxiously studied than interests that are spiritual. How unlike the Son of Man, who had not where to lay his head

We would wish by no means to disparage the liberality of the Christian public, or under the impulse of a mistaken zeal to reflect upon those distinctions in society, which have been divinely ordained for our general welfare. At the same time, we are far from considering that any follower of the Saviour can have had a *thorough* sympathy with his Master, unless on some occasions the ardour of his soul has defied the decisions of a cold calcula-

tion, and demanded a personal sacrifice in the display of benevolence.

If we have never given more than we could easily spare—if our pecuniary contributions have been attended with no self-denial—if they can only be compared to a cup of water from the ocean, neither needed nor missed—how can we have honored the Lord with our substance? How have we dedicated to him the first fruits of prosperity? Wherein can we be fairly described as liberally inclined, or how can we scripturally conclude we have done what we *could*?

It may be we have not *dis*honored the Lord with our substance in a gross and carnal sense—but if we have thought *excessively* of our own ceiled houses, and of those interests that are temporary and secular, while we have been unwilling to further the cause of religion beyond the contribution of a paltry coin, which though a pledge of our liberality in the eyes of men, was only a proof of our selfishness in the sight of God—surely we have been faithless and censurable in the stewardship we occupy.

"For ye know (saith the Apostle Paul to the church at Corinth) the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor that ye through his poverty might be rich." This was the strongest argument he could employ to impress upon them the duty of

christian benevolence, and if duly contemplated its requisitions are indeed overwhelming. "Therefore as ye abound in every thing, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace [liberality] also."

But who has impoverished himself for Christ? Where is the rich man who has made himself comparatively poor through the "riches of his liberality?" Or who in the abundance of his zeal for the cause of God and truth, has felt the bitterness of a holy mortification that he was unable to communicate more extensively, without becoming the subject of reproof from those inspired words, "If any man provide not for his own and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel?" There may have been instances of improvidence in pecuniary contributions, but if so, they are too few to need any cautionary admonitions; while on the other hand, the prevalency of a penurious, inordinate, selfish, and grovelling propensity, demands an incessant reproof.

It appears to us, that Christians *generally* have yet scarcely begun to recognize their duty and privilege in relation to the appropriation of the silver and the gold with which the Head of the Church has entrusted them. Has he given it so absolutely as to lay no claim upon the mode of its application?

Has he said, "Take it and employ it as you please"; Or has he even left us without express precepts to direct us in its occupation, or without solemn admonitions to guard us against a false, worldly, or selfish appropriation?

On the contrary, he has said, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting"—he has also said "Beware of covetousness for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth"—he has emphatically censured all inordinate concern about the future by an eloquent animadversion upon the fowl of the air and the lily of the field—and the whole of his directions and warnings, the seasonableness of his counsels, and the pathos of his entreaties, have been beautifully terminated with an "If ye love me, keep my commandments!"

In claiming the *greater*, surely he has involved the *less*. In demanding the loving *heart*, can he have overlooked the open hand? In seeking the homage of the *soul*, he must have implicated *circumstances*. And, Reader, let us not be deluded to suppose that the *mere overplus of our silver and gold*, however great that overplus may be, is sufficient to the due discharge of our stewardship, any more than the *mere overplus of affection, of time, or talent*, would constitute us worshippers in spirit and in truth. If it be only the overplus, it is an

abomination. Men may smile upon it as a handsome sum, and assign to its contributor the mead of commendation, but God will frown upon it as being only a fragment which remained when Selfishness had eaten the forbidden fruit of luxury and fashion to repletion.

We must maintain that it is not for the man of God coldly to calculate, how much he can spare after all his worldly projects have been consummated, and after "the pride of life" has received a handsome cheque upon the bank of plenitude. As though what he possessed was *absolutely* his own, and what he chose to bestow upon religious purposes an unclaimed and undeserved gratuity. But we affirm, it is his duty at the commencement of every year, or every half-year, to determine as it were upon his knees, or in the attitude of unreserved allegiance to Christ, what proportion of his income ought to be set apart to be applied to the various and numerous calls that may be made upon his christian benevolence. Recognizing the good providence of God, and finding that "the lines have fallen unto him in pleasant places"; and above all, that he owes the enjoyment of civilization, the choicest of his comforts, the dearest and noblest of his joys, and the salvation of his soul, to the name and gospel of Jesus, he ought unquestionably to feel that its claims are both pre-eminent and extensive. Nor should he

satisfy himself by leaving so important a point of responsibility to casual circumstances, or to the uncertainty of his own fickle disposition.

There are numbers of good men and women who would never think of looking out for avenues of benevolence, or opportunities of doing good, and who would allow a whole year to pass without any exercise of liberality, unless they were urged by personal application. So that their annual amount of pecuniary offerings depends not at all upon the scriptural basis of ability, or upon the extent of the trust reposed in them as stewards, but simply upon the uncertainty of circumstances, and the fluctuations of appeal. Ought these things so to be?

It may be pleaded by some, that the amount of their income is uncertain—to which we would reply, not so uncertain as to forbid the adoption of the plan we propose. If they determined *conditionally* were they subsequently faithful to their determinations, the end would be equally answered. But such uncertainty cannot apply to those who possess funded or landed property, from which they regularly derive a certain sum—neither can it apply to men engaged in commercial life, or professional employ, upon a fixed stipulation—neither can it apply to Ministers of the Gospel, who receive a settled stipend from their Churches—neither can it apply to household servants. Indeed it scarcely

applies to any except the Heads of large commercial establishments, whose returns and profits vary. And of these we would enquire, whether a deficiency of return or a diminution of profit, ought to diminish their contributions towards the cause of God, more than in the fair proportion, and whether a reduction of household expences, or luxuries ought not rather to be advocated?

To expect the worldly man to pursue such a system would be only to invite disappointment, but to demand it firmly and affectionately of the christian is only to press home the practical bearings of holy scripture, and simply to desire that he should walk worthy of his vocation. Consequently if any object to it, professing discipleship to Jesus, it may fairly be enquired of them, "What do ye more than they," who are altogether strangers to the influence of christianity, and who have their portion in this life?

Is it not a startling consideration that in many instances where men professing godliness have refused an application to their benevolence, having their hundreds unemployed, men of the world have proferred their assistance? And in how many cases have the generous emotions of a mere formalist put to shame the contracted spirit of the true worshipper? And how the mite of a poor widow has made the sovereign of the wealthy appear con-

temptible! And how many a glittering guinea from the affluent has been put to the blush by the unpretending penny from the indigent!

Indeed 'the voluntary system,' has been exposed to censures, and attacked by calumnies that it would never have experienced, had its advocates and admirers *loved* it more *practically*. It has never yet been caressed as it ought to be. Its beauties have only been partially commended, and its loveliness more than half eclipsed by the lack of a plenary benevolence on the part of its friends. Indeed it would pay off all the debts upon our respective places of worship, and build as many more—it would afford an ample remuneration to many of our half-paid Ministers—it would double the annual income of our Missionary societies—it would rather mourn over the want of *opportunities* than the want of *resources*, to do good—in fine, it would effect all that could be desired, if its friends would love it more practically and serve it more faithfully. If they would nurse it as their darling, and remember it is too heavenly in its origin ever to be fed to excess. Under these auspices, it would look so beautiful, and grow so rapidly and so interesting, that its very charms would silence the tongues of its adversaries, and win them over to embrace it.

And what is the great preventive to such an era? Not that the voluntary system has but few ad-

mirers, or that its opponents can either terminate its career, or destroy its efficiency—but that its advocates are for the most part inconsiderate of its real claims! And by an undue love of the world, an undue study of self, and an undue and expensive conformity to an age of luxury, are so led astray as to misappropriate a large portion of their silver and gold, and thus to impede the march of the voluntaryism they espouse. They keep it alive, but they do not minister sufficient stimulus to enable it to put forth its full powers.

It is lamentable to witness the prodigality that is indulged in the article of dress. Persons in inferior stations, or in a small way of business, spoiling the simplicity of infancy and childhood by burdening their offspring with unnecessary and costly appendages, and attiring themselves with tasteless trappings far superior to their circumstances. The consequence is they can afford nothing to sustain the voluntary system—collections in their opinion are made much too frequently—and even their pews occupied without payment. An application to their benevolence is an intrusion for which they are unprepared—a promise to consider of it is their civil mode of refusal—and thus while 'living to themselves' guinea after guinea is proudly wasted in decking the body, and adorning the exterior; the cause of God to which they profess to be attached,

if dependant upon *their practical* regard would be speedily exterminated.

These remarks unhappily apply too forcibly to many pious servants, who erroneously suppose a little worldly conformity will ensure them more respect, and who conclude that their subordinate situation justifies the application of all they receive to themselves. Forgetting that the *doctrine of proportion*, bears as much upon the humble domestic, as the monarch of the realm!

We have said an undue and expensive conformity to an age of luxury, in a great degree, destroys the efficiency of the voluntary system. And certainly it shrinks from the question, "How much owest thou my Lord?" Let this be elucidated by the following hypothesis, which however is rather a truism sustained by daily observation, than a mere conjecture.

Suppose an individual to have been engaged for twenty or thirty years in commercial life, and by uniform success in his activities, to have acquired an independency. His family have grown up around him, and he considers it will add to his respectability and to their prospects, if he remove them to a private and superior place of abode. It must be handsomely furnished. He must also keep his carriage and horses, or vehicle of some kind. And by the generous entertainment of his friends and

connexions, and other superfluities unnecessary to particularize, his annual expenditure is just twice what it was a year or two before.

Now without depreciating, for a moment, the retirement of the successful and industrious trader, when he has "borne the heat and burden of the day"—we would courteously observe that the whole of his increased outlay may be considered as *superfluities*—as expended upon himself and his family. And therefore while he has thus doubled his charity on this head,unless he has doubled his energy and his contributions towards the voluntary system—unless he has augmented his donations for religious purposes, at least in the same proportion that he has augmented them for his own comfort and gratification, he is condemnable and selfish in the course he has adopted. For ought we not to expect that when men professing godliness, are affluent enough to keep their country villas, and to drive about in their carriages, and to live in superior circles, they will be ensamples of Christian liberality, and communicate at least twofold more than in the days of anxious industry. Whereas we have frequently found that the menacing amount of superfluities at home, has rather induced an apology for the diminution of benevolence, than supplied a reason for enlarged generosity. They could pay for an extensive freehold for themselves, but as to the erection of a

small place of worship in some destitute spot, it would be proposed with fear and trembling and refused forthwith.

We wish not to forget, that there are some to whom these observations will not apply. Indeed it would be very melancholy, if no affluent man communicated according to his circumstances; still we are persuaded those to whom they are not appropriate are rather the exception than the rule. Therefore we would exhort with all longsuffering, and rebuke with all authority—urging believing men and women from the humble servant to the peer of the realm, to enter into a fair calculation, and a scriptural investigation, how far they have hitherto done what they *ought*, and how much deficiency there has been in their benevolence through the prevalency of a selfish and worldly indulgence, which though not amounting to the excess of the ungodly, bears a far greater resemblance to it, than to the self-denying spirit of Jesus Christ.

There are many men possessed of two or three thousand a year, who never gave away ten pounds in one sum during their lives—or rarely more than one or two guineas to a case. Now, however they may satisfy their consciences with the reflection that they did not *refuse* the application, it cannot be denied that they are unfaithful to their stewardship. It is vain to deceive ourselves. It is foolish to

shrink from reproof that we know we deserve. It is far better to resolve an amendment. And if worldly men will give their hundreds and sometimes thousands for the erection of Museums, Hospitals, &c. is it too much to expect that they who profess to be dead to the world—to have here no continuing city, but to seek one to come—to live to him who died for them and rose again—will as zealously espouse and befriend the interests of religion?

But the truth is, imaginary wants so multiply with augmented prosperity, that the more we gain, the more we crave; and many a man has deemed himself poorer, and less able to answer calls upon his generosity, when at the head of an expensive establishment, and in considerable affluence, than when his means were far more circumscribed. This can only be accounted for upon the principle that he has in the ascendancy of a worldly spirit lavished all the fruit of his success upon himself and his household, so that he has even less to spare than before he aspired to such dissatisfying superfluities.

Let those whose Income was once only £500 per annum, and who now realize £1000—who maintained their families comfortably upon the former sum, and who would have felt no uneasiness had it never been increased—let those reflect with an overplus of £500 by the providence of God, how little of it they have devoted to his glory! Has it not too

frequently been consumed upon their lusts and pleasures?

Or let the Mechanic who once earned only twenty-five shillings per week, and who now obtains thirty five, ask himself how much of the additional sum, he has employed to further the interests of that section of the church with which he is connected, or to promote the cause of Christ generally?

And we would add, let the members of the church of Christ universally, consider whether they appropriate *as much* annually (not to say more) to religious purposes, as they allotted in the days of their degeneracy to "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life?" How can it be reconciled with the doctrines of the cross, that a christian should be less willing to give his substance to the Redeemer who has redeemed him with his precious blood, than he was when an alien to dissipate it in the unfruitful works of darkness? Yet many a man has paid five shillings to convey his family to Drury Lane or Covent Garden Theatres, who after his conversion has grudged that five shillings to send them to a place of worship when the Sabbath day has been wet!

How many are ever complaining of the frequency of public collections, and the many appeals to their purses, instead of being thankful there are so many avenues of doing good. They forget that

the judicious and charitable appropriation of money is as much a part of the religion of Jesus Christ, as the ordinance of prayer. And that their Lord and Master is glorified by the one as well as by the other. They seem to think that *money* has nothing to do with *piety*, whereas the claim of piety upon their substance is supreme.

We knew a good man in comfortable circumstances who came down to Ramsgate to enjoy the breezes of our dark blue sea, and it so happened that during the three Sabbaths he was there, we had three successive gatherings. He was quite alarmed. One collection was for the current expences of the Chapel—the second for the reduction of the debt upon the Chapel—and the third for the Baptist Missionary Society. He left Ramsgate having contributed his three shillings to the three applications, and while so trifling a sum, given during the three weeks of his sojourn, evidently much disturbed him, perhaps he never considered what he had spent upon SELF!

In a day when claims both at home and abroad are so numerous—when there are so many excellent Institutions—it would be well if collections were weekly. If upon every Sabbath Day, we determined to assist some Society or other. This would make christian benevolence habitual—it would be so customary that there would be no complaint—

and as God accepteth not according to what a man hath not, but according to what he hath, there could be no excess in such an arrangement. Were there fifty-two collections in the year, nearly all could afford fifty-two farthings, many, fifty-two sixpences, shillings, and half-crowns, and not a few fifty-two pounds.

But at present, Ministers have the mortification to refuse Sermons, or Collections, for Village Preaching, Aged and poor Pilgrims, Missionary Societies, and innumerable other applications, both deserving and desirable, because they shall subject themselves to the charge of burdening their people. Whereas the truth is, the least liberal are the first to complain, and therefore their complaint should meet with the contempt it deserves. Besides the voluntary system can never be burdensome—this is its glory—for no man is *compelled* to give at all or even *desired* to give beyond his means.

If upon the Voluntary System any man has ever been burdened (and we know some that have in the abundance of their zeal) let it be remembered that they took the burden willingly upon themselves, and therefore the *willing mind* was an antidote against *the burdened back.*

We offer no apology for these colloquialisms—on these points, we must use *great plainness of speech*, lest our language should be unintelligible to those

whose coffers have been too long collapsed, and who would not feel the force of our remarks if they could help it. And we feel assured the liberal mind and willing heart will not be offended by a plain exhortation to the continuance of a duty which they have found both a comfort and a privilege.

In fine, let us remember our God *daily* loadeth us with benefits; and surely daily mercies demand daily gratitude. We are not stewards three or four times a year, but we are stewards every moment. How few have done *half* what they ought! Let us make the voluntary system so rich and influential by unqualified support, as to compel the compulsive system to flee away ashamed. This will be a friendly way of removing an enemy, and the brightest exhibition of Christian charity,

Reader! "Set your affections on things above where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God"—"forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold," &c. &c.—And God forbid that YOU should glory save in THE CROSS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, and may the world be crucified unto you, and you unto the world.

FINIS.

Gardiner & Son, Printers, 20, Princes street, Cavendish square.

PUBLISHED BY

T. GARDINER AND SON,

Princes Street, Cavendish Square.

SOPHIA DE LISSAU;

A PORTRAITURE OF THE JEWS (in the Nineteenth Century,) being an outline of their Religious and Domestic Habits.—*Fourth Edition,* duodecimo, price 5*s.* in cloth boards and lettered.

"Our own feelings have greatly deceived us, if this is not the most beautiful story we have read for many a day: and this even if it were no more than a fictitious vehicle for the amusing and interesting details of domestic habits, ceremonies, and superstition of the modern Jews. But when we are told that it is truth, the story acquires a heart affecting interest, that fiction, however beautiful, cannot reach." *Fry's Assistant of Education,*

"This little work contains some very curious and interesting particulars respecting the present state of the Jews. The information the volume contains is most valuable, and deserves considerable attention." *Athenæum.*

"Both as a work of curiosity and an interesting tale, this volume is, we think, very likely to be popular." *Literary Gazette.*

ORPHANS OF LISSAU.

And other interesting Narratives, immediately connected with Jewish Customs, Domestic and Religious, with Explanatory Notes. By the Author of "SOPHIA DE LISSAU," "EMMA DE LISSAU," &c. in one thick volume, 6*s.* cloth.

"This work contains some striking portraitures of the manners, prejudices, and opinions of that ancient people, the Jews; and being written by one who was by birth a Jewess, but now converted to the faith of the Christian religion, there are many important illustrations of character which could only be drawn by one who had been so circumstanced."

SACRED HISTORY,

In Familiar Dialogues; to which is added, the HISTORY OF THE JEWS, By Miss H. Neale. Sixth Edition, 2 vols. 12mo. with Four coloured maps, 10*s.* boards.

"This is a work which contains solid instruction and sound views of religion, with that share of dialogue, and that ease of manner and style which are pleasant to children. Parents are much indebted to the writer."

Babbington's Practical View of Christian Education, page 89.

A few Proof Impressions, on India Paper, of

THE PORTRAIT,

Prefixed to this Work, may be had of the Publishers,
Price 5*s.*

By the same Author;

BAPTISM AND COMMUNION,

8*vo. bound in Cloth, price* 3*s.* 6*d.*

EVILS OF COVETOUSNESS,

12*mo. bound in Cloth, price* 2*s.* 6*d.*

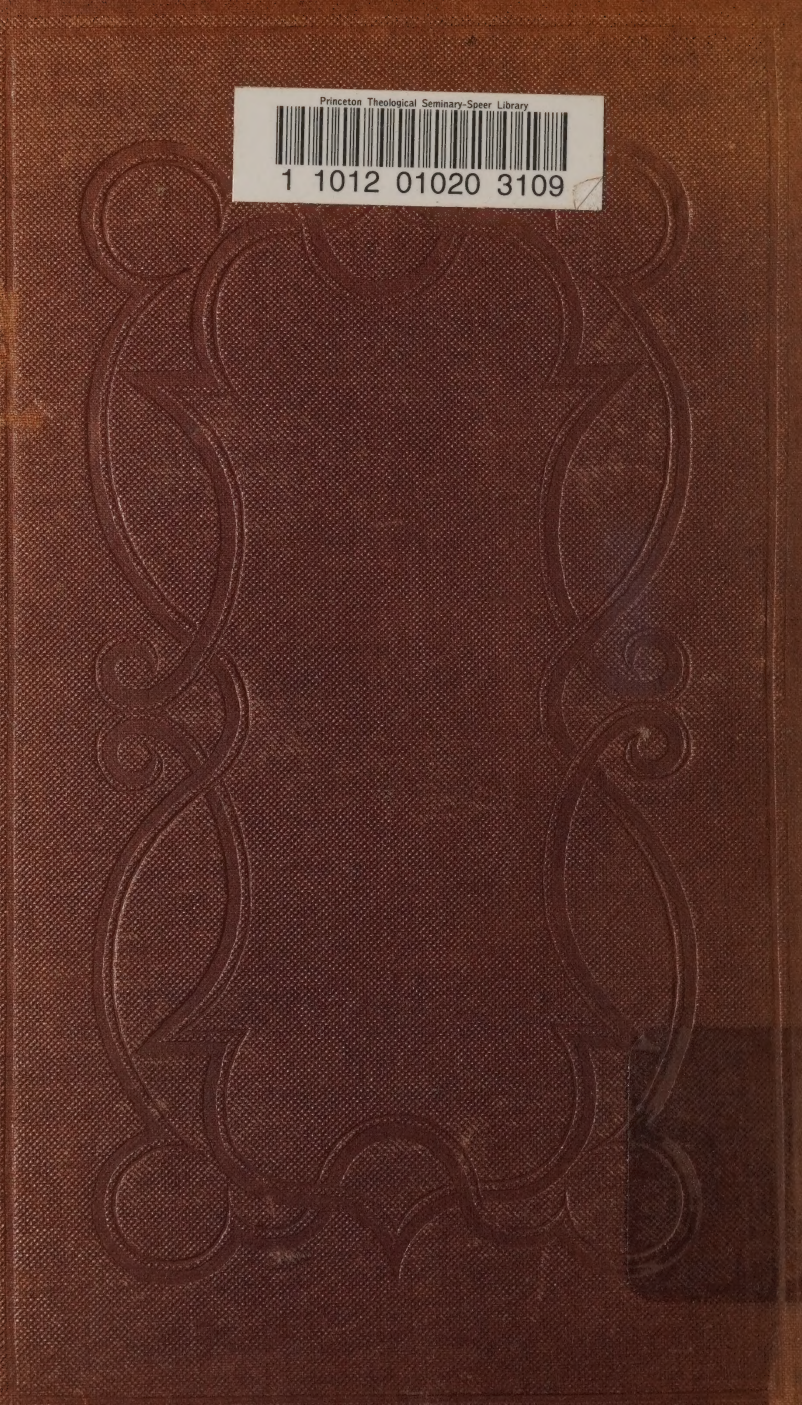
POVERTY AND PLENITUDE;

Two Sermons Preached for the Aged Pilgrim's Friend Society,

Price 1*s.*

Date Due

Ap 13 '42


Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 01020 3109